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ABSTRACT

This document is comprised of the three 2000 issues of "News & Issues," a newsletter from the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP) devoted to identifying and promoting strategies to reduce the young child poverty rate and to improve the life chances of children still living in poverty. The winter issue includes the following articles: (1) "Welfare Reform at Three--Is a New Consensus Emerging?" (2) "The Impact of Welfare Reform: Have We Asked the Right Questions?" (3) "Children and Welfare Reform--Lessons from NCCP's Issue Briefs"; (4) "Welfare Reform Works"; (5) "Success of Welfare Reform Unclear"; and (6) "New Advisors Bring Diverse Expertise to NCCP, Part 2." Articles in the spring issue are: (1) "Helping Vulnerable Young Children Affected by Welfare Reform"; (2) "Slow Growth in Regulated Child Care since Welfare Reform--Especially in Low-Income Communities"; and (3) "Beyond Welfare to Work: Strategies To Help Low-Income Working Families." Articles in the fall issue are: (1) "Child Poverty Rates Improve since 1993 But One in Six U.S. Children Is Poor"; (2) "Grade-School Class Raises Funds for NCCP To Help Less Fortunate"; and (3) "There Are No Stereotypes Here--The Faces of Child Poverty." Regular features in each issue include current activities of NCCP information on recent publications recommended for program administrators and policy makers, and information on publications available from NCCP. (EV)

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News & Issues, 2000

Carole J. Oshinsky, Editor

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1989 — 1999
A Decade of Work for Low-Income Young Children and Families

NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHILDREN IN POVERTY
The Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University

Identifying and promoting strategies to reduce the young child poverty rate and to improve the life chances of young children still living in poverty

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Welfare Reform at Three—Is a New Consensus Emerging?

by J. Lawrence Aber

This edition of *News & Issues* focuses on welfare reform at age three. Many of the key provisions of the 1996 federal welfare overhaul—the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)—took effect in the fall of 1996. To assess its impact thus far, we invited a leading proponent and a notable critic of PRWORA to summarize papers they presented at a recent conference on welfare reform.

As staff director for a key subcommittee of the House Committee on Ways and Means, Ron Haskins was one of PRWORA's main architects. On the opposite side was Wendell Primus, who resigned from his position as an assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in protest over the 1996 law. In their articles, these policy experts find some surprising common ground—as well as continuing differences—about the unfinished business of welfare reform. We also asked NCCP staff members to discuss welfare changes in the states and to highlight issues policymakers still need to address to strengthen child and family well-being.

It should be noted that at the time of its enactment, NCCP refrained from predicting PRWORA's impact, arguing instead that its effects would depend on factors such as state implementation, the course of national and regional economies, and other public policies. We argued that welfare reform could help or hurt children by changing: (1) family incomes, (2) parenting practices and parental emotional stress, and (3) access to and quality of services, such as child care and early education, health care, and family support. (See related article reviewing what NCCP has learned from its Children and Welfare Reform series.)

Whether you see the welfare glass as half empty (as Wendell Primus does) or half full (as Ron Haskins does), there are both successes to celebrate and problems to overcome. Drs. Haskins and Primus suggest a potentially powerful convergence between liberal and conservative recommendations on the top priorities for midcourse corrections. Both men identify a set of work and family supports that we need to enhance or create to complete the welfare reform revolution. For example, both call for increased enrollment of low-income children and families in food stamp and Medicaid programs.

A review of news coverage and recent opinion polls suggest a noticeable shift in public attitudes about the poor. The public (and many policymakers) appear to believe that the welfare system no longer rewards or tolerates idleness. Thankfully, they also appear to believe that if parents work full-time, no matter the job, their children should not live in poverty. Some commentators see these attitudes as support for a new "contingent social contract": If you work, you and your children should be able to receive an adequate income and set of basic services.

The 2000 elections will stimulate the opening rounds of the debate over re-authorizing PRWORA. There will be countless temptations to allow this debate to degenerate into a partisan food fight. NCCP will continue to provide one of many forums for a constructive and bipartisan debate that will focus on how welfare reform can benefit children and families. ■

The Impact of Welfare Reform: Have We Asked the Right Questions?

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) dramatically transformed the U.S. welfare system and with it the lives of millions of Americans. It is now a useful time to ask: *What questions have we answered about welfare reform? What questions remain unanswered?* These inquiries undergird the Research Forum on Children, Families, and the New Federalism's first working paper—*Welfare Research Perspectives: Past, Present, and Future*—released in August 1999 by NCCP.

The authors, Barbara B. Blum, director of the Research Forum, and Ellen C. Berrey, its former program coordinator, utilized the Research Forum's on-line database of welfare research projects (www.researchforum.org) to synthesize the growing body of welfare reform research and to isolate critical areas that have been notably neglected by current research efforts. The 40 percent decline in welfare caseloads from August 1996 to March 1999, notes Ms. Blum, "is a significant outcome of PRWORA but not the full story. While large percentages of the caseload are entering employment, many issues connected to job retention and adequacy of income are emerging. Perhaps most importantly, securing a job and leaving poverty are not, as so many research efforts demonstrate, synonymous."

Key Research Findings/Gaps

The working paper highlights several recent important research findings:

- ***Mandatory work requirements help decrease poverty and increase income and child well-being.*** A number of experimental programs include income supplements in order to give a clear incentive to obtain employment and achieve self-sufficiency. While program components differed significantly, the New York State Child Assurance Program, the Minnesota Family Investment Program, the New Hope Project, Canada's Self-Sufficiency Program, and other programs demonstrated increases in income, reductions in poverty, and improvements in child well-being.
- ***Time limits and sanctions lead to increased employment and reduced caseloads.*** While both the administration and rationale of time limits and sanctions are often problematic for staff and welfare participants, research documents increases in employment and reductions in caseloads at sites where time limits and sanctions were imposed.

The current level of welfare-related research activity is high—well over $500 million of public and private-sector funds sustain the various research efforts. But, adds Ms. Berrey, "many questions remain unanswered, and a number of key research gaps need filling." These include:

- ***What has been the impact of PRWORA and other statutory changes on immigrant families?*** Research is needed to understand how reducing benefits, such as welfare, Medicaid, and food stamps affects family's well-being. Immigrant children represent 10 percent of the U.S. child population but account for 15 percent of children living below 200 percent of the poverty level (approximately $33,000 for a family of four in 1998).
- ***Has PRWORA affected varying segments of the population disproportionately?*** While research shows that child poverty cuts across all racial and ethnic boundaries, more child outcome studies are needed that target Latino and African-American children, children living in urban and rural areas, and those in immigrant families.
- ***How will those welfare recipients who do not immediately find jobs fare?*** Further research efforts should focus on effective interventions for welfare participants who lack employment, are sanctioned, or are long-term "stayers." Such studies will likely reveal depression, developmental disabilities, and/or drug use among these welfare populations.

Emerging Methodology Issues

"For the multitude of current research projects to straddle the gap from the research world to the policy and, ultimately, implementation world," says Mary Clare Lennon, the Research Forum's director of research, "findings must be truly useful, pragmatic, and applicable. We found a number of research methodology and other issues to target for action."

- ***Promoting well-designed, rigorous research.*** While research activities are producing a wealth of information, the quality of the studies varies considerably. Issues related to design, scale, sample size, participation and response rates, attrition, and implementation all affect the validity of each study's findings.
- ***Disseminating information from conferences and meetings.*** In the past year, government and non-government organizations such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Institute for Research on Poverty, the Joint Center for Poverty Research, the National Research Council, the Welfare Reform Academy, The Urban Institute, NCCP, and The Brookings Institution have hosted multiple meetings on income security research. In addition, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has supported monthly briefings for Congressional staff. These and similar presentations need to be systematically summarized, so that pertinent information reaches larger audiences of researchers, policymakers, program personnel, and the media.
- ***Synthesizing findings.*** Simultaneous studies are measuring the effects of particular program

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Children and Welfare Reform—Lessons from NCCP's Issue Briefs

When the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) was first enacted in 1996, NCCP, with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, developed the Children and Welfare Reform Leadership Project. The aim, says Dr. Jane Knitzer, NCCP's deputy director, "was to turn the spotlight on issues and innovative practices in implementing welfare reform that also include a focus on young children and families."

To date, NCCP has developed eight issue briefs. (See listing of current and forthcoming briefs on back cover.) "Each addresses what we saw as a critical need," adds Dr. Knitzer, "and each is guided by the framework that we established from the beginning." That framework joins research and common sense to argue that welfare reform will be successful to the extent that it increases family income, reduces stress on families and promotes healthy parenting, and ensures access to basic and supportive services. It will be either harmful or neutral to the extent that it fails to do so.

The Series in Brief

The issue briefs cluster in three areas. One set of issue briefs provides frameworks for thinking about how to structure welfare and early childhood programs and policies to maximize their positive impact on parents and young children. For example, NCCP provides a set of guidelines to help those implementing welfare reform and those involved in early childhood programs (e.g., Head Start, Early Head Start, prekindergarten, child care, and early intervention) assess how well they are linking adult and family-focused efforts and to develop new strategies. As Ann Collins, NCCP's associate director for program and policy analysis notes, "welfare reform represents a new opportunity to promote the healthy development of young low-income children and their families." "But," she also notes, "this will work only if policies and programs at both the state and local levels address issues of access and quality as well as cross-system and program connections."

"As a result of welfare reform, states and localities are beginning to recognize the full range of supports needed by low-income working families."

A second group of issue briefs draws attention to how states, communities, and programs are trying to meet the challenge of making welfare reform work for young children by focusing on specific issues that do not always get the attention they deserve. Examples include: (1) how to use welfare reform as an opportunity to promote fathers as nurturers of their young children as well as economic providers (also emphasized in NCCP's *Map and Track: State Initiatives to Encourage Responsible Fatherhood*); (2) how to enhance kith and kin care—child care provided by relatives and neighbors that is usually unregulated but serves a large proportion of children; and (3) how to improve the quality of infant and toddler care. "High-quality care is particularly vital since infants and toddlers are entering child care in unprecedented numbers," adds Collins.

The third focus of the series has been on a group of families that is likely to receive increasing attention—families where the adults face severe barriers to employment. The NCCP issue briefs highlight the urgent need to pay attention to the young children in these families—a need well-recognized by those running programs but rarely acknowledged by policymakers. According to Dr. Knitzer, "these young children are among the most vulnerable and the least likely to enter school ready to learn. We need to seize the opportunity that welfare reform presents to help these children thrive and to repair (or prevent) damaged early parent-child relationships."

Toward the Future

Each issue brief emphasizes its own lessons and implications. "But perhaps even more compelling," comments Dr. Knitzer, "are the five themes that have emerged across the issue briefs—themes that we can translate into future policy, research, and program strategies."

- **Connecting across systems** *Making connections between welfare and other systems requires deliberate effort—it does not come naturally.* Early childhood leaders do not routinely work collaboratively with welfare reform administrators, early childhood specialists are not "on call" for welfare officers, and partnership-building does not come easily. "But, we have found some promising examples of collaboration that join TANF administrators, Early Head Start, Head Start, child care and sometimes home-visiting programs in innovative ways," says Dr. Nancy Cauthen, an NCCP senior policy analyst. (See also the report NCCP prepared for the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: *Enhancing the Well-Being of Young Children and Families in the Context of Welfare Reform: Lessons from Early Childhood, TANF, and Family Support Programs.*) These partnerships have led to the allocation of TANF dollars for new programs, to cross-training of early childhood and welfare staff to help families better understand TANF provisions and timetables, and to integrating work support strategies directly into early childhood programs.

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POLICY POINT OF VIEW

Welfare Reform Works

by Ron Haskins

Dr. Haskins is staff director of the Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives and editor of its Green Book. *He was previously a professor of history at the University of North Carolina and is the author of books and articles on children's intellectual development, parenthood, and government social programs. In September, he spoke about the effects of PRWORA—of which he was one of the main architects—at the Joint Center on Poverty Research (JCPR) Commissioned Research Conference in Washington, DC entitled: For Better and For Worse: How States Can Use Welfare Reform to Improve the Lives of Low-Income Families and Children. For more information on his paper—Welfare in a Society of Permanent Work—and the conference, see the JCPR web site: www.jcpr.org/conferences/sept1999conf.html.*

Evidence is rapidly accumulating that the 1996 welfare reform law is working. Especially when compared with the previous cash welfare system of entitlement benefits, the new law is a major improvement.

The 1996 reforms are truly a break with previous law. At least five characteristics of the reforms qualify as substantial departures from previous policy:

- Under the old Aid to Families with Dependent Children program (AFDC), millions of mothers became dependent on welfare because they were entitled to cash benefits—which means that they got money regardless of whether they took constructive action to help themselves. The new law repeals this entitlement;
- The open-ended funding of the old program was ended in favor of a block grant with fixed funding—the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant. Now states have great incentive to help people leave welfare;
- Under the old system able-bodied adults could receive benefits year after year and not be required to take action toward independence. Now states must put a specific percentage of their welfare caseload into work programs or be fined by the federal government;
- The few people who were supposed to prepare for work under the old system often ignored the requirement. Now states enforce their requirements with sanctions;
- The day people sign up for welfare, they are told they have a life-time total of five years of cash benefits. This new limitation has brought a great sense of purpose to both welfare case workers and recipients.

These attributes of the new welfare system have been in place in every state since 1996 or 1997, and many of the features were in place in most states by around 1994.

So what do we know about the effects of these reforms? First, caseloads have declined by about 50 percent since 1994. Although most observers seem to believe that welfare rolls decline when the economy is hot and rise when the economy drops, examining actual enrollment since the 1950s shows this claim to be false. During the recovery of the 1980s, for example, economic growth increased employment by 18 million jobs, but the rolls increased by more than 12 percent. Thus, the current decline is unprecedented in American social policy.

Working Mothers/Federal Funds Fuel Success

Second, the amount of federal money available per family on welfare is increasing dramatically. Compared with 1994, states now have nearly twice as much federal money per family. This money, which must be spent on children and families, means that states can maintain their welfare benefit levels and still have lots of money for child care, transportation, training, and whatever else is required to help the remaining families leave welfare.

Third, work by female heads of families has increased dramatically. In the years before 1996, the average increase in female family heads entering employment was about 140,000 per year. But in 1996, the year welfare reform passed, the increase jumped to 197,000. In 1997, the increase was 412,000, by far the largest increase ever. Even more impressive is employment by never-married mothers. These mothers are the poorest, the most likely to go on welfare, the most likely to stay on welfare for a long time, and the least likely to work. Between 1993 and 1998, there was a whopping 40 percent increase in employment by never-married mothers.

Fourth, and perhaps of greatest importance, child poverty and poverty among minority children has declined every year since 1994, especially black child poverty.

The Second Revolution in Social Policy

A major reason welfare reform is working so well is that, in addition to the welfare revolution, the federal government has created a second revolution in social policy—a work support system of programs that provide benefits to poor and low-income working families. Chief among these programs are the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Medicaid, child care, and the child tax credit. This year the federal government will spend almost $52 billion on these programs to help working families.

Here is why we are at last beginning to win the war against poverty: We reformed welfare to encourage or force able-bodied adults to leave the rolls. Then we

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POLICY POINT OF VIEW

Success of Welfare Reform Unclear

by Wendell Primus

Dr. Primus is director for income security at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. He was formerly chief economist for the U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means and staff director of its Human Resources subcommittee. He was also deputy assistant secretary for human services policy in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He resigned from government service in protest over the passage of PRWORA. He is an author of the new publication Recent Changes in the Impact of the Safety Net on Child Poverty, *and for many years edited an annual* Green Book*—the compendium of statistics and information about federal entitlement programs under the jurisdiction of the Committee. His JCPR conference paper was entitled: Several Suggestions for Improving the Work-Based Safety Net and Reducing Child Poverty.*

The conventional wisdom is that the welfare bill is an unqualified success because of the dramatic caseload declines—now slightly over 50 percent since the peak in March of 1994. [illegible]r caseloads alone, however, is a poor measure of success. The ultimate criteria for measuring welfare reform's success should be whether the well-being of children and families has improved. Recent Census data suggest that caseload reductions in cash welfare and food stamps have substantially exceeded the reductions that would have resulted from increases in earnings or income. In fact, the loss of these benefits has resulted in income losses among the poorest female-headed families.

Those making the "unqualified success" case cite the substantial evidence that single parents in these low-income families have joined the labor force and enjoyed substantial earnings gains. In determining why employment has increased, it is difficult to disentangle the impact of welfare policy changes from improvements in the economy—falling unemployment plus real wage gains at the bottom—and from other policy changes that have made work pay, such as substantial increases in the EITC.

Incomes of Poorest Mother-Only Families Decline

Unfortunately, these increases in earnings often did not lead to an increase in income among the poorest female-headed families. Between 1993 and 1995, earnings and incomes of single-mother families rose substantially, especially among the poorest 60 percent of these families. In contrast, between 1995 and 1997, the poorest single-mother families experienced a decline in their average disposable incomes due to sizable decreases in assistance from means-tested programs. The poorest 20 percent of persons in single-mother families also saw their average disposable income fall by $580 between 1995 and 1997, after adjusting for inflation. About 80 percent of the decline was due to declines in means-tested assistance.

The next-to-the poorest fifth of single-mother families (incomes between 75 and 112 percent of the poverty line in 1997), failed to see their overall disposable income rise between 1995 and 1997, even though their earnings and EITC increased significantly. The poorest 10 percent of persons in single-mother families fared worst, with an average 14 percent decline in income, three-fourths of which was due to a decrease in their means-tested assistance.

The sharp drop-off in means-tested assistance also resulted in a slowdown in the reduction in child poverty, despite continued improvement in the economy. Between 1993 and 1995, the number of poor children fell 2.4 million. By contrast, between 1995 and 1997, the number of poor children decreased by only 360,000. A major reason for the difference is that the proportion of children that means-tested programs lifted from poverty declined significantly. Census data show that if means-tested benefits had been as effective in reducing child poverty in 1997 as in 1995, some 700,000 fewer children would have been poor in 1997. In addition, the child poverty gap, a measure of the depth and severity of poverty among children, also failed to improve between 1995 and 1997. The disappointingly modest reduction in the number of poor children between 1995 and 1997 and the lack of progress in easing the severity of poverty for those children remaining poor, despite a very strong economy, suggests that pronouncements of the success of welfare reform need to be tempered.

Food Stamp and Medicaid Caseloads Reduced

Decreases in program participation have been a major cause of declines in income. Research indicates that the decline in welfare caseloads may be driving down participation in the Medicaid and food stamps programs. Many families that no longer receive cash assistance may be unaware of their continued eligibility for food stamps and Medicaid. Participation in food stamps has declined substantially in recent years, while participation in Medicaid has failed to increase despite significant expansions in eligibility. For the first time in almost a decade, according to administrative data, the number and percentage of children and parents enrolled in Medicaid declined in 1996 and again in 1997.

These findings suggest too much emphasis has been placed on caseload reduction and insufficient attention paid to income and poverty outcomes. Now is the time for a mid-course correction. The emphasis on work can

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Success of Welfare Reform Unclear (continued from page 5)

be maintained but needs to be supplemented. More eligible working families should get the food stamps, Medicaid, and child care assistance that they need to move them out of poverty. Barriers these families face that deter them from getting the assistance to which they are entitled should be eliminated. Bonuses should be given to states that do the best jobs of enrolling the working poor in these programs.

Involve Noncustodial Dads

In addition, we need to change the culture of child support offices to focus on work for noncustodial parents. Too often welfare policies are aimed only at custodial parents. Noncustodial parents also need assistance in entering the labor force, retaining jobs, and climbing the employment ladder. Fatherhood programs need to help these dads become more involved in the lives of their children. If we believe strongly that low-income noncustodial parents should pay child support, then—rather than effectively taxing child support at 100 percent tax rates (as we do in most states today when the mother and children are receiving TANF)—we should match or supplement these child support payments. This may be the best way to give noncustodial parents an earnings subsidy like we provide for custodial parents through the Earned Income Tax Credit.

Finally, if, as Larry Mead has suggested, welfare offices now have the tools to enforce work requirements, consideration should be given to providing more adequate benefit levels to those families that have severe labor force impediments and cannot conceivably work. For example, single parents that cannot work because of a disabled child or grandparents caring for their grandchildren should be provided a more adequate safety net. Other steps also could be considered, but this would be a good start.

These findings are based on data through 1997 from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS). Although analysis of CPS income data for 1998 is preliminary, those data appear to confirm our results. The poorest decile had the same income loss relative to 1995 as in 1997.

It is also unclear what will happen to low-income families if there is a downturn in the economy. It will be some time before we have a comprehensive understanding of all of the impacts of welfare reform. But if states take advantage of their surplus TANF funds, work to ensure that families get all the assistance to which they are entitled, and use their flexibility to assist both needy custodial parents and noncustodial parents to enter the labor force, the reform efforts may turn out better than many of us had expected. If, however, we continue down the current path and TANF funds are instead supplanted (replace existing state funding on low-income families), we will have missed a golden opportunity to improve the lives of poor children. ■

Welfare Reform Works (continued from page 4)

created a terrific work support system to subsidize their income when they took the low-wage jobs for which they are qualified.

Perhaps the best evidence of the effectiveness of this dual revolution in welfare and work support is captured by a U.S. Census Bureau alternative measure of poverty that takes into account the various benefits in the work support system. By this broader measure, child poverty has declined by 26 percent in the past four years.

Requiring Work is A Key Factor in Welfare Success

How important is this achievement? In 1965, the nation decided to fight a war against poverty by creating scores of social programs and giving away billions of dollars in cash and benefits. Between 1965 and 1995, federal and state governments increased spending on social programs by a factor of 10—from about $40 billion to nearly $400 billion in constant dollars. Despite all these new programs and spending, the child poverty rate did not decline. We threw billions of dollars at poverty and poverty won.

The reason is now clear. We were using the wrong weapon. Our main strategy was giving away benefits without requiring anything in return. Instead of poverty reduction, we got welfare dependency. Instead of helping people get back on their feet, we made a system that punished work. Now we have a new system that encourages and, where necessary, demands work. Then we supplement income from work with a generous work support system.

There are at least three problems created by welfare reform that require continuing attention from policymakers —not enough children are getting Medicaid after their family leaves welfare, more children should be receiving food stamps, and a small group of families at the bottom are being left behind. Solving these problems is the major item on the welfare agenda for the next several years. Meanwhile, we should hold firm to the new commitment to end welfare as we know it by requiring work. ■

NCCP Responds

NCCP, like Dr. Primus, agrees with Dr. Haskins' bottom line on welfare reform: (1) hold firm to requiring work; (2) create or expand the work and family supports needed to help families make the transition out of poverty; and (3) do more for the most vulnerable families who are falling even further behind. Nevertheless, NCCP disagrees with some of the details of Dr. Haskins' argument. Yes, the recent drop in welfare dependency is unprecedented, but so was the increase in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Yes, child poverty has declined since 1993, but mostly because a robust economy has put more low-skill parents to work and the EITC has helped make low-wage work pay better. Yes, government spent billions on social programs from 1965 to 1995; but poverty did not win—it fell among the elderly who, along with poor children, also gained improved access to health care.

New Advisors Bring Diverse Expertise to NCCP, Part 2

Five new council members were profiled in the summer 1999 edition of *News & Issues*. This issue profiles seven additional new members who are also distinguished experts in their fields.

LynNell Hancock is an education writer and editor and Assistant Professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, where she developed the school's curriculum on covering children's issues. Previously, Hancock served as national education editor for *Newsweek Magazine*, education beat reporter for the *New York Daily News*, and investigative reporter for the *Village Voice*. Her forthcoming book on welfare reform, *Hands to Work*, will be published by William Morrow.

Lawyer and psychologist **Jan Heffner** served as assistant commissioner of mental health, forensic psychiatry, and then child welfare from 1991–1994 for the state of Ohio. Currently executive director of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, she oversees grants and media and public relations assistance to social service agencies in the U.S. and Canada. She is interested in public and private partnerships to implement welfare reform and promoting understanding about welfare changes.

Cornelius D. Hogan has been Secretary of Vermont's Agency of Human Services since 1991. He was also acting Chair of the Vermont Health Care Authority. He is a Director of the Vermont Community Foundation. Earlier, he was Vermont's Corrections Commissioner, was Chair of the Vermont Lottery Commission, and ran a mid-sized corporation. He established outcome measures that have demonstrated improvements in the condition of Vermont's children and families. He is also a past President of the American Public Human Services Association (formerly APWA).

Alan Levenstein joined the Council as a Governing Committee member. He recently retired as Vice Chairman and Chief Strategy Officer of Bozell Worldwide to devote his time to public service. Key accomplishments of his advertising career are creation of the Bozell Strategy Development Process and leading the team that revitalized Chrysler Corporation in 1992. He is also an award-winning writer of plays, short stories, and book criticism. At Columbia University, he is also on the board of the Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health and the President's Council of Teachers College, where he and his wife founded the Books for Children Project. He is a board member of many New York cultural and civic institutions including the Enterprise Foundation New York.

A professor of psychology at the University of Michigan, **Dr. Vonnie C. McLoyd** co-directs its Fogarty Minority International Research Training Program, and directs the Children in Poverty Program at its Center for Human Growth and Development. Her numerous published works focus on poverty, economic stress, and children's development. She was a William T. Grant Faculty Scholar in Child Mental Health from 1986–1991 and a MacArthur awardee in 1996. She received the 1994 Reuben Hill Research and Theory Award from the National Council on Family Relations for outstanding work that combines theory and research on key family issues. From 1992–1996, she served as associate editor of *Child Development*.

As executive director of the Children's Action Network (CAN) since its inception in 1990 **Jennifer Perry** has successfully mobilized the entertainment industry to inform the public about the needs of children and the contribution individuals can make in their lives. Previously, she was director of public affairs for Norman Lear's Act II philanthropic organization. She has government experience working for U.S. Senator Alan Cranston and Congressman Mickey Leland, the Democratic National Campaign Committee, and the Cranston for President Committee. She also advises the North American Council of Adoptable Children and the Major League Baseball Players Trust for Children and serves on the Los Angeles Commission on the Status of Women and that city's Child Care Commission.

Bill Purcell became mayor of Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee, in September 1999. He entered public service in 1986 after practicing law when he was elected to the Tennessee House of Representatives. A former House Majority Leader and Chair of the Select Committee on Children and Youth, Purcell's five-term tenure in the Tennessee legislature saw reforms in education, criminal sentencing, health care, and workers compensation, and a ranking for Tennessee of "best managed state" in the country and lowest tax state in America. Most recently, he served as director of the Child and Family Policy Center at the Vanderbilt Institute of Public Policy Studies, a nationally recognized center building a bridge between academic research, politics, and best practice to benefit children and their families. ■

The Impact of Welfare Reform (continued from page 2)

components like time limits, financial incentives, sanctions, and school attendance requirements. Others are analyzing the impacts of different PRWORA programs on specific groups, such as children and welfare leavers. In addition, multiple research projects are examining aspects of each state's income security programs and policies. Synthesizing their findings should be a research priority.

- ***Enhancing current research activities.*** Analytic and implementation studies require continued support in order to improve representativeness and sample size, extend the duration of the study inquiry, and generally enhance research design. The quality and use of administrative data are of particular importance.
- ***Examining specific populations.*** More information is needed about the status of families who earn low-wages or who have left public assistance without obtaining employment, especially high-risk families where the parent(s) may be depressed, developmentally disabled, or drug addicted.
- ***Testing special interventions.*** Different programs need to be developed and experimentally tested in order to identify effective interventions for salient problems. For poor working families, some combination of an earned income credit, access to food stamps and Medicaid, and provision of quality child care, transportation, and housing assistance may increase stability and decrease the likelihood of recidivism that many of these families experience. For more troubled and vulnerable families, well-designed supported work programs and enhanced, Head Start-like child care may succeed in reducing welfare enrollment and promoting child well-being.

"The documented progress in welfare-related research activities is commendable and encouraging" says Dr. J. Lawrence Aber, NCCP's director. "However, now is the time to apply what has been learned to our national and state policy and local practice activities to enrich our understanding of America's low-income families and to advance the ultimate goal of eradicating poverty." ■

On-Line Welfare Reform Resources

The on-line era offers researchers, policymakers, advocates, and practitioners a wealth of welfare reform-related information via the Internet. The web sites have a breadth of information about welfare changes and their impact on young children and families. These sites are updated frequently, assuring users of the latest information and analysis.

In particular, the Research Forum on Children, Families, and the New Federalism, a unit of NCCP, hosts its own web site, **www.researchforum.org**, consisting of an on-line database of up-to-date summaries of welfare research projects and a compilation of related resources. For more information about welfare reform resources contact Ellen Winn, the Forum's program coordinator, by phone at (212) 304-7132 or via e-mail at **ew204@columbia.edu**.

Early Praise for *Lives on the Line: American Families and the Struggle to Make Ends Meet*

"How can the world's wealthiest nation tolerate a higher percentage of our children living in poverty than any other industrial nation? Because poverty is statistics, not people. This book makes poverty come alive, prodding our collective dulled conscience."
— **Senator Paul Simon, Illinois**

"Almost half of the nation's children live in officially defined poverty or near-poverty. Putting a human face on this and other statistics, the authors present a disturbing and provocative composite portrait of 10 families struggling to make ends meet—four white, two Hispanic, three black and one Hawaiian/Samoan. [The authors] identify three factors —teen parenthood, low educational achievement, and temporary or low-wage work—that they call "the 'Bermuda Triangle' of family poverty." Add the associated risks of domestic violence, poor child care, and damage to early brain development from malnutrition, preventable birth complications, environmental toxins, etc., and readers will begin to see why poverty cuts across urban, suburban, and rural areas... In almost all the profiled families, one or both parents work, contradicting the widespread stereotype of the poor as lazy or irresponsible. In a succinct closing chapter, the authors call for a combination of public- and private-sector measures to help prevent or reduce child poverty. The issues they raise should fuel election-year debate."
— ***Publisher's Weekly***

"This book is wonderfully written, reading like a page-turning novel, drawing us into those whose 'lives are on the line' in a way that sharpens our policy vision and evokes a more lucid understanding of both existing and developing policies."
— **Gary Stangler, President, American Public Human Services Association**

"These case studies, based on extended interactions with 10 poor families across the United States, comprise a compelling and compassionate view of survival after welfare reform. The human interest of the case studies is supported by a concise, excellent demographic overview of U.S. child poverty and a chapter on public policy trends. The authors have good credentials... Recommended for public and academic libraries and as a textbook for undergraduate sociology courses."
— ***Library Journal***

"An exquisitely reported look at the increasing numbers of Americans who hover on the edges of official poverty. We walk right past them every day—these tired house-cleaners and house-painters and fast-food workers—never seeing the complicated layers of hope and despair uncovered [here]. Critical context and explanation about the demographics of child poverty... make this a compelling, important book."
— **Cathy Trost, Director, Casey Journalism Center for Children and Families**

"With so many children growing up in poverty today, the ability to peer into the everyday lives of their families—to see their parents at work and at home—offers us a rare and invaluable window though which to observe what is happening to our nation's young. *Lives on the Line* gives us this essential perspective which few other publications have."
— **Melissa Ludtke, Editor, *Nieman Reports*; author of *On Our Own: Unmarried Motherhood in America***

Lives on the Line: American Families and the Struggle to Make Ends Meet
by Martha Shirk, Neil G. Bennett, and J. Lawrence Aber
Published by Westview Press, September 1999, 294 pp., $24.95 plus handling. To order call (800) 331-3761.

Children and Welfare Reform: (continued from page 3)

- **Enhancing the quality of child care across settings and ages** *Paying attention to quality child care for infants and toddlers and to supporting nonregulated caregivers should be central to the early childhood agenda but is now at the periphery.* The early care and education agenda should be broadened to focus more attention on the needs of caregivers who may never be regulated, and especially to those who care for infants and toddlers. "This has been fueled, in part," says Ms. Collins, "by research showing both the importance of early brain development and that quality child care is linked to better early childhood outcomes. But the needed initiatives and monitoring is still far too limited."
- **Targeting vulnerable families** *Attention to the most vulnerable young children, those whose emotional development is already compromised by family or other circumstances, is very limited.* As states turn their attention to adults with the most barriers to work, including substance abuse, domestic violence and mental health problems (especially depression), it is crucial that their young children receive assessments, and, if necessary, early intervention. It is also crucial that their parents have the chance to address not just work skills, but parenting issues, as part of treatment and rehabilitation strategies. Yet, while models for this kind of integration of behavioral health and early childhood are emerging, typically, they are neither statewide, nor communitywide, but based on limited research and demonstration efforts. New kinds of information, policies, and strategic planning processes are vital.
- **Continuing to innovate** *Welfare reform holds new opportunities for state and local innovation to address some long-standing challenges in new ways.* New research about how families are faring under welfare reform suggests that a large group of families (perhaps larger than initially predicted) are, in fact, leaving welfare. But to make it, these families need a solid support system that includes access to subsidized child care and health care as well as other supports. "As a result of welfare reform," adds Dr. Cauthen, "states and localities are beginning to recognize the full range of supports needed by low-income working families."
- **Addressing the needs of all low-income children and families** *While it is important to focus on the welfare population, it is also necessary to address the broader needs of all low-income young children.* "Poverty remains the greatest risk factor for young children, both for their development and for their success in later life," concludes Dr. Knitzer. "This means that our agenda must address both poverty reduction strategies and child development and family support strategies." Building on these lessons, over the coming year, NCCP will explore ways to link economic and noneconomic strategies that can truly move families out of poverty and ensure their young children's well-being. ■

Center News Briefs

- NCCP director, Dr. J. Lawrence Aber, recently helped inaugurate the Columbia Institute for Child and Family Policy. Dr. Aber is a co-director of this university-wide interdisciplinary effort focusing on the most intractable problems facing families and children. Fellow co-directors are Dr. Sheila B. Kamerman, the Sheila Brody Compton Foundation Centennial Professor in the School of Social Work, and Dr. Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, the Virginia and Leonard Marx Professor of Human Development at Teachers College.
- NCCP is a co-sponsor of the **9th Annual National Conference on Family Literacy** being held in Orlando, Florida, January 24–26, 2000 on the theme: "Family Literacy: New Challenges in the New Century." This gathering of policymakers, researchers, administrators, and funders will strengthen the leadership for family literacy in each state and increase participation in the field. For further information, visit their web site: www.familit.org or call: (502) 584-1133.
- The Center welcomes **Dr. Hsien-Hen Lu** to the Demography Unit. Dr. Lu will be conducting innovative demographic research on working poor families and public policy and documenting relationships between trends in family structures and children's well-being. He will also contribute to NCCP's child care work. His recent Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison focused on families, social inequality, and social policy.
- The Center bids farewell to two outstanding staff members. Communications associate **Jamie Hickner**, who received a Master of Urban Planning degree from the Wagner School of New York University in June, will be using her education at Phipps Community Development Corporation, a nonprofit agency building community housing with support services in New York. She raised the visibility of NCCP through her work with national, state, and local media, and was also acting webmaster. Former NCCP Demography Unit member **Jiali Li** has joined the New York City Department of Health, Bureau of Sexually Transmitted Disease Control, as a research scientist. Her statistical analysis was behind major NCCP publications including *One in Four: America's Youngest Poor* and the young child poverty annual statistical updates. ■

National Center for Children in Poverty
The Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health
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Carole J. Oshinsky *Managing Editor*

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Publications of Note

This column highlights recent publications recommended for program administrators and policymakers by the Center's program staff and librarian. In keeping with this issue's theme—Welfare Reform at Three— the publications chosen reflect the range of thinking about the impact of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 and how to evaluate it.

- **Child care after leaving welfare: Early evidence from state studies,** by Rachel Schumacher and Mark Greenberg. Survey research, say the authors, is the most important information source to understand the child care arrangements of welfare leavers not receiving subsidized care. Despite variation in the types of questions asked, response rates, and populations pursued, state studies reveal that: less than 50 percent of working families who left welfare received child care assistance; about 40 percent of families were aware of the availability of child care subsidies; the most common care arrangements included family, friends, and neighbors (kith and kin care); most families used child care subsidies for center-based care; and although not the most common barrier to employment, lack of child care was a consistent concern. The state studies do not address the quality of child care although, the authors assert, this needs to be considered in future analyses. The authors recommend ways that states can obtain better data from families receiving and exiting welfare to help inform policy: (1) Improve survey response rates by offering incentives and utilizing multiple means of contacting survey participants; (2) Enlist TANF and child care administrators in designing survey questionnaires; and (3) Find out why welfare leavers are not always informed about subsidy benefits. (1999, 70 pp.; $4.00 paper, Electronic version free)
Center for Law and Social Policy, Attn: Publications, 1616 P Street, NW, Suite 150, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 328-5140/Fax: (202) 328-5195/Web: www.clasp.org/E-mail: info@clasp.org

- **Children and welfare reform: A guide to evaluating the effects of state welfare policies on children,** by Child Trends. The purpose of this handbook is to encourage and help other states to include child outcomes in their studies of the effects of welfare policies. It is based on The Project on State-Level Child Outcomes. Representatives from state welfare agencies, the federal government, and research organizations identified a core set of child outcomes and ways in which they could be measured. They chose 12 states to participate in the planning phase; of those, five states now include child outcome measures in their welfare reform evaluations. They developed a core framework of *pathways* to describe the intentional and unintentional ways in which children are affected by welfare reform, including targets of welfare policies (income, employment, family formation, and attitudes) which affect other adult areas (psychological well-being, family stability and turbulence, use of health and human services, and consumption) and which can affect children's environments (child care, home environment, and parenting practices). These pathways can lead to positive or negative changes in child outcomes in the areas of education, health and safety, and social and emotional adjustment. Surveys administered in Florida are used as examples. (1999, 69 pp.; $20)
Child Trends, Attn: Publications, 4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 100, Washington, DC 20008; (202) 362-5580/Fax: (202) 362-5533/Web: www.childtrends.org/E-mail: amoore@childtrends.org

- **Children in working poor families,** by Richard F. Wertheimer. Using data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and Current Population Survey (CPS), the author portrays the status of working poor families from 1987–1996, a period of economic growth and recession. He examines the relationship between the poverty rates of children and their parent's work effort, specifically correlating parental work effort and earnings capacity related to education level with child care and health insurance coverage and expenses. He considers alternative measures of poverty that include deductions from income such as federal and state taxes and child care expenses and benefits such as food stamps and EITC. When compared to nonpoor working families, poor working families are less likely to: (1) have a parent earning more than $10 per hour; (2) be covered by health insurance; and (3) own a car. The author asserts that, from an economic standpoint, the welfare to work movement has been positive in promoting work regardless of family structure, race/ethnicity, and parental education. Yet, while living in a working family reduces the likelihood of child poverty, in 1996 among poor children, 52 percent who lived in married-couple families had parents who met the work standard of one full-time working parent while 30 percent of the single-mother families had a parent who met the work standard of the equivalent of half-time work. (1999, 70 pp.; $15)
Child Trends, Attn: Publications, 4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 100, Washington, DC 20008; (202) 362-5580/Fax: (202) 362-5533/Web: www.childtrends.org/E-mail: amoore@childtrends.org

- **Evaluating welfare reform: A framework and review of current work,** interim report, edited by Robert A. Moffitt and Michele Ver Poeg. To assess whether the goals of PRWORA are being achieved, the authors call for researchers to consider the many challenges attached to evaluating those who have left the welfare rolls. Although states are required to provide annual reports on their welfare programs, reporting guidelines are not specific and the questions to answer are open-ended. National-level data sets that can also reflect state-level policy and outcome variations are needed, but, assert the authors, there are many gaps in the data that make it difficult to determine the effects of welfare reform. The authors identify important elements to guide state- and national-level research: (1) Ensure that research addresses key populations; (2) Improve resources to foster data collection at state and national levels; and (3) Work toward making research results comparable across jurisdictions. Researchers should look at families who remain on welfare, represent a hard-to-serve population, or are being encouraged or have chosen not to apply. All low-income families, they argue, should be evaluated for changes in their circumstances and behaviors. Researchers must determine when someone becomes a welfare leaver; what are the state-by-state roles of case workers or service providers; and if assistance includes noncash as well as cash benefits. One group defines welfare leavers as those who have stopped receiving cash assistance for two consecutive months. Researchers are studying the differences between welfare leavers and those who have been diverted from services and the effects of entering as well as exiting welfare. (1999, 151 pp.; $31.50)
Panel on Data and Methods for Measuring the Effects of Changes in Social Welfare Programs, Committee on National Statistics, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council. National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Avenue, NW, Lock Box 285, Washington, DC 20055; (888) 624 8373 or (202) 334-3313/Fax: (202) 334-2451/Web: www.nap.edu/E-mail: zjones@nas.edu

- **Families who left welfare: Who are they and how are they doing?** by Pamela Loprest. Based on data from 44,000 households

in the National Survey of America's Families, this report highlights the economic, health, and social characteristics of welfare leavers compared to other low-income families. Interviewers asked: (1) How good are the jobs acquired and how much do families rely on the income and benefits from work? (2) How are nongovernment benefits supporting the transition off welfare? (3) What are some continuing economic struggles? The author uses indicators such as problems buying food and paying utilities and rent to extend the view of economic struggles beyond work, earnings, and use of government benefits. Nearly half of the respondents ran out of food before the end of the month and a third have had to reduce food portions or skip meals. Nearly 40 percent reported problems paying rent, mortgage, or utility bills. These struggles, says the author, are more common for former welfare recipients still receiving some government benefits than for families living near 150 or 200 percent of the poverty line. Fewer welfare recipients reported having to cut portion size or reduce meals, experienced shortages in monthly food money, or had problems paying housing bills. The author suggests that researchers focus future studies on former welfare recipients who have returned to welfare (nearly one-third), those who are not working and have no partner working (one quarter), and those returning to work in a less favorable job market. (1999, 27 pp.; Assessing the New Federalism Discussion Paper No. 99-02, Electronic version free)
The Urban Institute, 2100 M Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037/ (877) 847-7377/Fax: (202) 429-0687/Web: www.urban.org/E-mail: pubs@ui.urban.org

- **The initial impacts of welfare reform on the incomes of single-mother families**, by Wendell Primus, Lynette Rawlings, Kathy Larin, and Kathryn Porter. This report considers the well-being of single-mother families and their children within the context of dramatically declining cash welfare rolls and food stamp assistance. Without considering government benefits, nearly half of all single-mother families have incomes below the poverty line; many more have incomes only modestly above the poverty line. Data from two time periods: 1993–1995 and 1995–1997 captures the effects of economic growth and welfare changes. In 1998, 40 out of 100 poor children received cash assistance—the lowest proportion receiving cash aid since 1970, and at a level below need. This low rate cannot be explained by improvements in the economy. While means-tested programs, excluding the EITC, did lift a number of children out of poverty between 1993 and 1995, this trend reversed between 1995 and 1997. In 1995, means-tested programs removed 3.2 million children from poverty, in 1997, 2.4 million—862,000 fewer than in 1995. If the EITC benefit is included, the numbers improve greatly. The authors' further analysis reveals that while the incomes of single mothers sharing income does provide a significant boost in income for a small fraction, it does not affect the whole picture. The authors conclude: (1) It is too early to know the effects of welfare changes and further analysis is needed before any statements on the overall outcomes can be made; (2) Studies need to address all populations; and (3) State and national policies should provide economic support for those leaving welfare for work in low-wage jobs. (1999, 70 pp.; $5 paper, $2 executive summary, Electronic version free)
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Attn: Publications Service, 820 First Street, NE, Suite 510, Washington, DC 20002; (202) 408-1080/ Fax: (202) 408-1056/Web: www.cbpp.org/E-mail: bazie@cbpp.org

- **Why Americans hate welfare: Race, media, and the politics of antipoverty policy,** by Martin Gilens. The author explores what Americans' think about the poor—their beliefs about its causes, what government should do about it, and the American image of poverty. He asserts that anti-poverty policy is shaped by public attitudes about the poor. Although Americans tend to be individualistic, they generally support increasing government effort and spending on anti-poverty programs. Consistently, Americans believe government is not doing enough to help the poor with the existing programs that address health care, education, child care, the elderly, and homelessness. Surveys show that Americans generally believe in a strong work ethic and that programs should be available for the poor who "deserve" help, or, are trying to work but need extra support. Americans generally associate poverty and welfare receipt with particular ethnic or racial groups, perceiving them as lazy or not part of the American work ethic. The author argues that whites oppose welfare because they think it primarily serves racial or ethnic groups who would rather accept assistance from government programs than work, particularly blacks. This view is alive despite the fact that only 36 percent of welfare recipients are black and 27 percent of all poor Americans are black. While it is true, says the author, that 3 in 10 blacks are poor compared to a 1 in 10 ratio for whites, blacks still constitute a small segment of the U.S. population. The author traces the roots of these perceptions to the media's biased portrayal of blacks and the poor from the era of slavery until today. Poor whites are typically given sympathetic coverage, with their blight linked to economic hardship, while poor blacks are stereotyped as lazy due to their culture. (1999, 296 pp.; $25 + p/h)
University of Chicago Press, Attn: Chicago Distribution Center, 11030 South Langley Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637; (773) 568-1550/ Fax: (773) 702-9756/Web:www.press.uchicago.edu/E-mail: custserv@press.uchicago.edu

- **Working hard but staying poor: A national survey of the working poor and unemployed,** by the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers and the Center for Survey Research and Analysis, University of Connecticut. This report reveals the perceptions of those who work hard but remain poor—the one fifth of working Americans with little or no literacy levels in reading and math, skills essential for job entry and advancement—who are not participating in government poverty programs and earn up to two times the federal poverty level. Topics covered include job satisfaction, job security, education and training, and government assistance. Responses show that working poor Americans desire more work hours, education, and training, and more opportunities for career advancement. Almost all respondents—a national sample of 500 adults in households with children—were concerned about earning enough money to support their families and half had difficulty paying their bills each month. Most reported needing an additional $200 per month—the equivalent of about five extra work days. If the minimum wage were to increase by $1 to $6.15 an hour, say the authors, this would boost the monthly incomes of minimum wage earners to about $170 per month. Since the study revealed that the working poor and unemployed are more likely than the rest of American workers to have children under the age of six and would take advantage of on-site child care, the authors suggest that policies such as the Workforce Investment Act, which ensures comprehensive career centers, will enable workers and job seekers to obtain needed services, including education resources, career planning, and training. The survey respondents favored government involvement in providing employment support services such as financial assistance, but also felt that the private sector should provide workforce development services such as training and education. (1999, 29 pp.; *Work Trends: Americans' Attitudes About Work, Employers, and Government Survey*, Vol. 1, Number 3; $10.95 paper, Electronic version free)
John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning & Public Policy, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 33 Livingston Avenue, 5th Floor, New Brunswick, NJ 08901; (732) 932-4100/Web: www.heldrich.rutgers.edu

Publications available from the National Center for Children in Poverty

FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

- ☐ **Children and Welfare Reform Issue Brief No. 7—Better Strategies for Babies: Strengthening the Caregivers and Families of Infants and Toddlers.** E. Gilman and A. Collins. **$5.00.**
- ☐ **Children and Welfare Reform Issue Brief No. 8—Promoting Resilience Among the Most Stressed Young Children and Families: Toward More Responsive Welfare-Linked Policies and Programs.** J. Knitzer. **$5.00.**

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- ☐ **Children and Welfare Reform Issue Brief No. 6—Beyond Work: Strategies to Promote the Well-Being of Young Children and Families in the Context of Welfare Reform.** N. Cauthen and J. Knitzer. Presents four general strategies that states and localities can use to strengthen basic family supports such as health care and child care, promote young children's health and development, and address specialized child and family needs. The strategies are illustrated with examples of state and local policies, programs, and partnerships from around the country. *Issue Brief.* (November 1999), 24 pp. **$5.00.**
- ☐ **Teaching Conflict Resolution: An Effective School-Based Approach to Violence Prevention.** J. L. Aber, J. Brown, and C. Henrich. Describes one of the largest and longest running school-based violence prevention programs in the country—the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program—and discusses the results of a rigorous evaluation of its effectiveness. Provides concrete evidence that early school-based violence prevention initiatives such as this should be included in communities' efforts to prevent violence among children and youth. *Report.* (1999). 20 pp.
- ☐ **Enhancing the Well-Being of Young Children and Families in the Context of Welfare Reform: Lessons from Early Childhood, TANF, and Family Support Programs.** J. Knitzer, N. Cauthen, and E. Kisker. Examines how child development and family support programs are responding to new welfare policies and practices. Describes the kinds of partnerships developing between those serving low-income families with young children and those implementing welfare changes, and opportunities and challenges emerging for TANF agencies and early childhood programs. *Report.* (1999). 84 pp. Paper copy available from Children and Youth Policy Division, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. DHHS, 200 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 450G, Washington, DC 20201 or fax: (202) 690-5514.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED — Partial Listing

- ☐ **Map and Track: State Initiatives to Encourage Responsible Fatherhood, 1999 Edition.** Continues to track how states are responding to welfare changes with strategies to promote fathers as both economic providers and nurturers and updates national and state demographic trends on father absence and single-father families. Includes maps, charts, and descriptions of 50 state initiatives, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. *Report.* (June 1999). **$19.95.**
- ☐ **Young Children in Poverty: A Statistical Update, 1999 Edition.** Figures and tables profile extremely poor, poor, and near poor populations of young children under age six and their families in the U.S. Includes special studies on welfare reform, parental employment, and education, and long-term trends using official and alternative measures of poverty. (June 1999). Available on the web: www.nccp.org
- ☐ **Child Care Research Partnership Report 2: Patterns and Growth of Child Care Voucher Use by Families Connected to Cash Assistance in Illinois and Maryland.** Uses child care administrative data from two states to analyze child care subsidy use by current welfare recipients—to enable training, education, and employment, and by former recipients now in the workforce. *Report.* (May 1999). **$5.00.**
- ☐ **Map and Track: State Initiatives for Young Children and Families, 1998 Edition.** J. Knitzer and S. Page. Updates and expands information provided in the 1996 edition of this report on state initiatives to address the multiple needs of young children and families. Added for 1998 is information on whether states are implementing explicit strategies to link welfare reform with children's initiatives, additional state-by-state indicators of young child and family well-being, young-child-related state welfare provisions, and income-promoting supports to low-income families. *Report.* (1998). 208 pp. **$19.95. Special pricing:** *Map and Track* series: 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 editions—**$29.95** for two titles; **$34.95** for three editions; **$39.95** for all editions.
- ☐ **Early Childhood Poverty Research Brief 1: Young Child Poverty in the States—Wide Variation and Significant Change.** N. Bennett and J. Li. Describes the considerable variation among the states' young child poverty rates. Suggests that changes in three demographic factors—family structure, employment patterns, and educational attainment—account for almost one-third of changes over the last two decades. Findings are particularly important in light of states' new obligation to monitor their child poverty rates and submit corrective action plans if rates increase significantly due to welfare reform. (1998). 16 pp. **$5.00.**
- ☐ **Starting Points: Challenging the "Quiet Crisis"—A Description of the Starting Points Sites.** Summarizes strategies and activities undertaken by the 14 Starting Points sites established as an outgrowth of the Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children. Outlines overall themes and lessons for policymakers, advocates, and others concerned with the well-being of very young children and their families. *Report.* (1997). 52 pp. **$5.00.**
- ☐ **Child Care Research Partnership Report 1: A Study of Regulated Child Care Supply in Illinois and Maryland.** A. Collins and J. Li. Analyzes regulated low-income child care markets in two states using administrative data on programs in each state's child care resource and referral database, female employment, and poverty rates to understand how government policies effect the supply of child care. *Report.* (1997). 32 pp. **$5.00.**
- ☐ **Lessons from the Field: Head Start Mental Health Strategies to Meet Changing Needs.** H. Yoshikawa and J. Knitzer. Describes promising strategies generated by Head Start programs to meet the changing mental health needs of Head Start children, families, and staff. Designed to stimulate dialogue and collaboration between mental health and Head Start communities and others working with low-income families. *Report.* (1997). 103 pp. **$15.95** ($9.95 Head Start/Child Care programs).

Issue Briefs on Children and Welfare Reform: **$5.00** each / **4 for $15.00**

- ☐ **Issue Brief 1: How Welfare Reform Can Help or Hurt Children**
- ☐ **Issue Brief 2: Anticipating the Effects of Federal and State Welfare Changes on Systems that Serve Children**
- ☐ **Issue Brief 3: The New Welfare Law and Vulnerable Families: Implications for Child Welfare/Child Protection Systems**
- ☐ **Issue Brief 4: Responsible Fatherhood and Welfare: How States Can Use the New Law to Help Children**
- ☐ **Issue Brief 5: Child Care by Kith and Kin—Supporting Family, Friends, and Neighbors Caring for Children**

- ☐ **One in Four: America's Youngest Poor.** Statistical profile of the six million poor U.S. children under age 6. Includes data on associated factors, young child poverty rates for each state and for the 12 largest U.S. cities, maps, charts, and tables. *Report.* (1996). 88 pp. **$16.95.** *Abridged Version* 32 pp. **$7.95.**
- ☐ **Building Bright Futures: An Annotated Bibliography on Substance Abuse Prevention for Families with Young Children.** Selection of materials to help Head Start and other early childhood programs and organizations strengthen families and enable communities to organize to prevent substance abuse. (1996). 52 pp. **$8.00.**
- ☐ **State Welfare Waiver Evaluations: Will They Increase Our Understanding of the Impact of Welfare Reform on Children?** A. Collins and J. L. Aber. Examines how well evaluations of 21 state welfare reform initiatives address the needs of children as well as their parents. *Working Paper.* (1996). 37 pp. **$10.00.**
- ☐ **Children and Welfare Reform: Highlights from Recent Research.** A. Collins, S. Jones, and H. Bloom. Summarizes studies on how children in low-income families may be affected by welfare changes. *Research Highlights.* (1996). 68 pp. **$10.00.**
- ☐ **Young Children in Poverty: An Annotated Bibliography of Books and Reports.** Describes key publications. (1995). 80 pp. ~~**$12.00**~~. Sale **$6.00.**

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News & Issues

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1989–1999 A Decade of Work for Low-Income Young Children and Families

NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHILDREN IN POVERTY

The Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University

Identifying and promoting strategies to reduce the young child poverty rate and to improve the life chances of young children in poverty

Helping Vulnerable Young Children Affected by Welfare Reform

As TANF caseloads fall, policymakers are turning their attention to adults facing special barriers to employment. Parents who experience domestic violence, substance abuse, and serious mental health issues, particularly depression, face great challenges for their children—especially their young children. For this most vulnerable population, welfare reform offers the opportunity to address a long-standing and high stakes issue: helping both the parents *and* their children.

NCCP's latest Children and Welfare Reform Issue Brief, *Promoting Resilience: Helping Young Children and Parents Affected by Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Depression in the Context of Welfare Reform*, focuses on the subset of "hard-to-serve" low-income families most affected by these risk factors who have young children. "Welfare reform and the push to reach the national goal of ensuring that every child enters school 'ready to succeed' provide the impetus for communities, states, and the federal government to take action now on behalf of this often ignored population," says the author, Dr. Jane Knitzer, NCCP's deputy director.

The families that we are talking about are so complex... we have to be mindful of this and not just look at alcohol/substance abuse or mental health or low literacy or domestic violence, because we are going to miss the boat.

A participant at the NCCP meeting, Promoting Child and Family Resiliency in the Context of Welfare Reform, Washington, D.C., October 1998.

Families Confront Multiple Risks

It is not known exactly how many families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), sanctioned under TANF, or reaching time limits are affected by these risks, or how many of them have young children. An estimated 16–37 percent of welfare recipients abuse drugs or alcohol, 20 percent are likely to face domestic violence in a 12-month period, and two to three times as many low-income mothers as other mothers are likely to experience depression. One study found that 28 percent of low-income parents report being depressed compared to 17 percent of all parents. Maternal depression is a particularly harmful condition. It not only affects young children, but the results last, with children of depressed mothers showing higher rates of mental illness or greater incidence of high risk behaviors as they grow older. Even as such families cope with these special challenges, they must also confront the basic pressures all low-income families struggle with—adequate income, and access to housing, health services, transportation, and child care.

Although many young children in families with adults affected by these risk factors are resilient and do fine, the report paints a sobering picture of the many other young children who have been traumatized. Dr. Knitzer describes the risks these young children face—poor health, difficulty with relationships, and insufficient learning and mastery of social competence tasks. "We know that for children with the 'double jeopardy' of being poor and facing these special challenges, the risk of negative developmental outcomes multiplies," she says.

(continued on page 2)

"By bringing together early childhood resources, TANF agencies, and agencies dealing with substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental illness, communities can create strategies that address both generation's needs simultaneously, more effectively, and more cost-efficiently than is often done now," says Dr. Knitzer. At the same time, there is an urgent need for more formal research on the efficacy of complex intervention efforts over time and how they relate to school readiness.

Meeting the Service Challenge

A meeting organized by NCCP in 1998 supported by the Center for Mental Health Services of the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) spurred NCCP to synthesize information about strategies and best practices that could guide policymakers and program directors in meeting the service challenges of this fragile group of low-income parents. Says Dr. Knitzer, "We found those working with this population have three interrelated goals: (1) to promote resilience, social competence, and school readiness in the children; (2) to repair (or prevent) damaged parent-child relationships; and (3) to ensure the safety of the children while helping parents meet the work-related goals of welfare."

Resilience-promoting strategies can be implemented by three key social service systems: (1) early childhood programs; (2) behavioral health systems; and (3) welfare agencies. The issue brief describes how eight programs from across these systems are working to link services that focus on vulnerable children and families. "Unfortunately," Dr. Knitzer laments, "our research underscores how few policy incentives and stable funding streams there are for states, programs, and communities to develop the integrated service delivery programs or community-based systems of services that address the needs of both adults and their young children." Yet, she points out, the building blocks for such a two-generation support system are found in every community.

New Opportunities to Partner

"New partnerships and coalitions can bring these services together and help more families succeed in the new era of welfare reform," Dr. Knitzer believes. The aim must be to weave together adult focused services addressing both employment and parenting, child focused services including early intervention, and basic supports, including housing, health care, and quality early care and education, which, for this group of children, are especially crucial. TANF dollars might be used to develop targeted intensive strategies. When welfare offices consider co-locating substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence counselors, they might also consider including child development staff or early intervention teams linked to the implementation of the federal Infant and Toddler Early Intervention Program. At the same time, Dr. Knitzer notes, there is a great need to address the systemic challenges, such as lack of funding for mental health consultation to early childhood programs serving these families, the difficulty in pooling categorical substance abuse and mental health funds for adult services, and the need for more research. "This is surely a 'twofer' investment," says NCCP director, Dr. Larry Aber. "Research shows unequivocally that many of these children are headed for not just poor outcomes, but costly ones to society."

A bill (S. 2435) introduced in Congress in April calls for setting up child protection/drug agency partnerships to promote child safety, family stability, and parental recovery from alcohol and drug abuse. "This is a needed step," says Dr. Knitzer, "But many vulnerable children are not involved with the child welfare system, yet they have similar needs. Therefore, it is crucial to promote an even broader range of partnerships, encompassing the mental health, early childhood, and TANF communities as well."

"It is important to look beyond the work-related needs of low-income families," Dr. Knitzer emphasizes. This means focusing attention on basic supports and ensuring all children have nurturing and stimulating child care experiences whatever the setting. But for the most vulnerable families, even this is not enough. "For them," says Dr. Knitzer, "the time is right for taking a two-generation approach. Welfare reform compels us to give attention to the adults. Public national education goals demand we pay attention to the children. And common sense and psychological knowledge compel attention to both." ■

Strategies to promote resilience in the most stressed young children and families

Point of Entry—Early Childhood Services

- Integrate behavioral service teams into primary health care, child care, and Head Start settings.
- Build a statewide system of behavioral supports for young children and families, including home visiting and family support services.
- Increase the skills and competencies of early childhood staff to address multineed families.

Point of Entry—Substance Abuse, Mental Health, and Domestic Violence Services

- Integrate intensive early childhood and family-focused services in substance abuse, violence prevention, and mental health settings.

Point of Entry—Welfare Agencies

- Connect children living with grandparents and relatives, but receiving welfare (the so-called "child-only" cases), with appropriate prevention, treatment, and support services.
- Address the needs of both custodial and noncustodial fathers affected by substance abuse, violence, and mental health issues, as well as mothers.
- Use welfare-related dollars to promote integrated behavioral and child development services for the most stressed young children and families.
- Bring TANF, early childhood, substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence staff together.

Slow Growth in Regulated Child Care Since Welfare Reform —Especially in Low-Income Communities

Is the supply of regulated child care growing in response to the demand created as welfare reform and a strong economy lead more parents into the work force?

A new report from NCCP, *Scant Increases After Welfare Reform: Regulated Child Care Supply in Illinois and Maryland, 1996–1998*, offers some important insights into changes in the supply of regulated care. Regulated child care supply per 1,000 children under age 13 grew by just 6 percent in Illinois and Maryland between June 1996 and June 1998. Following the federal government's August 1996 overhaul of welfare, policymakers across the country had hoped for significant increases in regulated care to help meet rising demand from parents moving from welfare to work.

Yet in both states, communities most likely to feel the impact of welfare reform—those with the highest concentrations of low-income people—generally saw the least growth in the supply of regulated care in child care centers and family child care homes. Meanwhile, more affluent communities saw the most growth in regulated child care capacity.

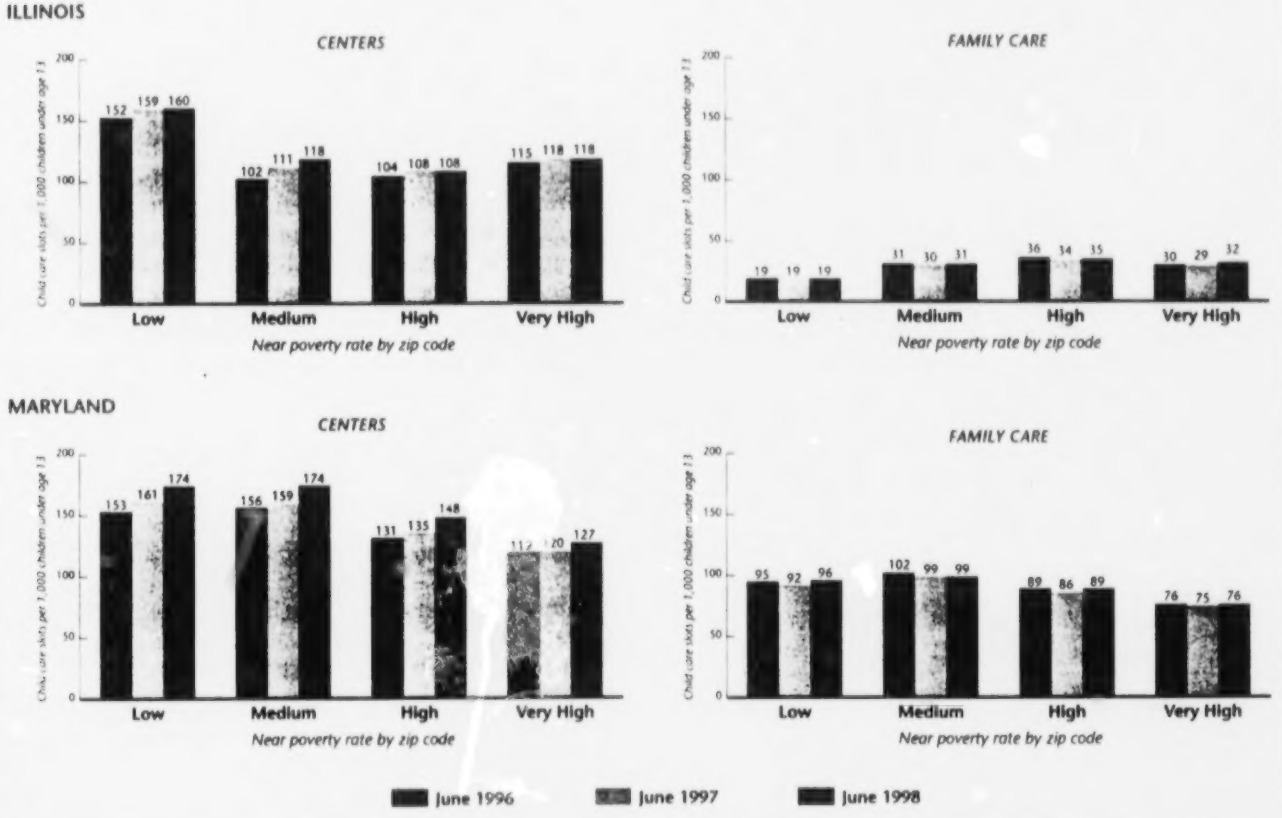
Examining the regulated portion of the child care market in these states, the report does not describe the unregulated care—including care by relatives and care in the child's home (often referred to as informal or kith and kin care)—used by many parents. Nor does it describe the numbers of vacancies in regulated programs, which may indicate how well the supply of child care is meeting the demand.

Support New and Expanded Centers

Center care accounted for all growth in regulated capacity in Maryland and most growth in Illinois. In both states, most of the increase in center slots came from the

(continued on page 5)

Regulated child care slots per 1,000 children under age 13, in centers and in family care, by concentrations of low-income people in Illinois and Maryland, 1996, 1997, and 1998



Note: Differences in family child care licensing regulations in Illinois and Maryland make exact comparisons between supplies of regulated family child care in the two states impossible. Maryland regulates all family child care provided for a fee for more than 20 hours per month. Illinois does not regulate family child care homes with three or fewer children (including the provider's own) or with children from only one family. Therefore, Maryland data on regulated supply include a greater portion of the state's family child care supply than do Illinois data.

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POLICY POINT OF VIEW

Beyond Welfare to Work: Strategies to Help Low-Income Working Families

by Cornelius D. Hogan

Mr. Hogan is a senior consultant at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. He is also a faculty member of the National Governors' Association Policy Academy and an NCCP Council of Advisors' member. He has been secretary of Vermont's Agency of Human Services and acting chair of the Vermont Health Care Authority, a director of the Vermont Community Foundation, and a president of the American Public Human Services Association. Earlier, he was Vermont's corrections commissioner, chair of the Vermont Lottery Commission, and ran a mid-sized corporation. He established outcome measures that have demonstrated improvements in the condition of Vermont's children and families.

The nation has been fortunate. The onset of the federal welfare reform legislation—the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA)— occurred during the strongly rising tide of the longest economic expansion in the nation's history. And, on balance, the results have been very positive. The number of welfare recipients has declined by nearly half, and in some parts of the country caseloads have plummeted by more than 75 percent. And, many of those leaving welfare have gone into jobs. The predicted "race to the bottom" and mass disaster for low-income children and families have not occurred.

Because of the extent of caseload reductions, states have considerable cash remaining from the welfare block grants created by PRWORA, and with some significant exceptions, they have invested those funds into child care, transportation, job training, and other important supports that help people into the job market. This performance has exceeded even the most optimistic of projections at the time of the law's enactment.

These events also demonstrate that over the last several years, welfare considerations have been at the center of the nation's policy concerning the poor.

Enable Working Families to Get Ahead

Time flies, and it is now only a year until the reauthorization of the 1996 welfare law. It is now time to apply what has been learned and move to the next important set of challenges. Lessons learned over the last several years can be applied in broader ways, to help more people to improve their economic circumstances and to lead better lives. This is the central challenge of the next round of welfare reform.

Now that many of the poor are in the marketplace and working, it's time to recognize their achievements and contributions to the vibrancy of our economy and to the lives of so many more fortunate Americans. We need to accept the basic and equitable idea that people who work, and who provide vital services to us all, ought to receive more supports that enable them to earn more and give them and their families the opportunity to lead fuller lives. And the nation will be stronger for it.

It must be acknowledged that all have not fared well amidst our growing national prosperity. First, in the mid 1990's there was the news of the extraordinary executive salaries and bonuses that seemed to defy reason and logic. But most would want to believe that, even with that anomaly, which touches a relatively few members of our society, low-income working families would have also benefited significantly in the distribution of income gains during this prosperous time.

That is not the case. A recent analysis by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, entitled *Pulling Apart—A State-by-State Analysis of Income Trends*, organizes the nation's and the states' income data over the last two decades. (See http://www.cbpp.org/1-18-00sfp.htm.) After adjusting for the impact of inflation, the income of the top fifth of the population improved 30 percent during the 1980's and 1990's, while the people in the bottom fifth saw their incomes decline by 6 percent over the same period. And, if not for the extraordinary growth of the national economy, the lower 20 percent of our people may have lost more ground.

Tap New and Proven Strategies

Now is the time to enhance proven strategies and develop the new strategies that are needed to extend the benefits of our strong economy to the Americans that have, thus, far, been left in its wake.

One example of a proven strategy that could be expanded upon is the earned income tax credit (EITC), which generally has strong political support and has contributed to reducing poverty. In a strong economy, the EITC represents an even greater opportunity and serves as an important incentive for the working poor.

Child care accounts for 20 percent or more of the family budget for many low-income families, and is a critical issue for most low-income working poor families. Tax policies, which support middle- and low-income working parents—such as an expanded and refundable child care

(continued on page 5)

Beyond Welfare to Work (continued from page 4)

tax credit—will create new opportunities for those who want to work.

The cost of health care can be at least 15 percent of a working poor family's annual budget. Improved access to affordable health care, particularly for the working poor, is somewhat unexpectedly again on the nation's political agenda. And the timing here is important, because there is strong evidence that the success of welfare-to-work policies has led to many newly employed former welfare recipients being improperly denied Medicaid coverage. This must be reversed.

Promoting equity building in housing policy, micro-enterprise and matching savings accounts, restructuring of training and education programs, greater insight into the role of technology as a leveler and potential lifter, and the "skilling up" of the working poor are all emerging strategies to help move low-income families to contribute to, and benefit from, our nation's rapidly changing "new economy."

Widen Goals of Welfare Reform

At this critical juncture, there are many organizations and groups interested in pursuing different pieces of the larger agenda described above. The foundation community is actively working to provide supports that strengthen families, to provide more children and families with access to affordable health care, and to help communities come to grips with issues that affect the economic circumstances of their citizens.

More and more state governments, the National Governors' Association, and others have been working to improve states' capacities to better serve those economically distressed communities.

The National Center for Children in Poverty, the host of this newsletter, is committed to encouraging and participating in a nationwide, broadband discussion about the benefits to society-at-large of pursuing policies which, over time, lift substantial numbers of families out of poverty.

Invest in Families

Timing is everything when it comes to change. At this moment, there is an unusual alignment of interest among key stakeholders, combined with the availability of resources to make investments that will take welfare reform to the next stage. That stage ought to concentrate on moving to a broader and higher view of the possibilities—a view that goes beyond welfare reform to focus on investing in the supports that working families need to thrive in the "new economy."

It is now time to move our national, state, and local policies, to a new place, where the working poor, a very large and historically underserved segment of our society, begin to benefit in ways that improve and enrich their lives and the life of our nation. ■

Slow Growth in Regulated Child Care Supply (continued from page 3)

opening of new centers rather than the expansion of existing centers—although in Maryland existing centers did contribute more than a third of the increased capacity in center care.

"States and communities need to offer meaningful financial incentives to support new and existing centers in underserved, low-income communities where parents are seeking out, but not finding, center care for their children," says NCCP director Dr. J. Lawrence Aber. "These efforts should be coordinated with ongoing increases in Head Start and prekindergarten programs."

Sustain Family Child Care Supply

Family child care capacity actually declined a little in Maryland, while in Illinois it grew a little. In both states, many family child care homes opened, but even more closed. "Simply to maintain a constant family child care supply, efforts to attract new providers to the field and promote their economic viability must be unflagging," observes Dr. J. Lee Kreader, lead author of the NCCP report.

While low-income parents often work nontraditional hours, centers in lower-income communities in both states were less likely than centers in more affluent communities to be open by 6:30 a.m. and close at 6:00 p.m. or later. By contrast, family child care homes were more likely to be open for extended hours in low-income than higher-income communities.

Focus on Low-Income Communities, New Programs

"We know that quality child care helps prepare children for school success. Low-income children are the least likely to enter school ready to learn. Policymakers must make special efforts to ensure that all parents, including those in low-income communities, have quality options in regulated care, as well as supports for quality in unregulated settings," stresses Dr. Aber.

Policymakers also need to tailor special supports to new centers and the even greater numbers of new family child care programs. "During their crucial early months, child care centers and family child care homes could benefit greatly from the kind of assistance needed to start up small businesses, as well as help ensuring that children are in safe environments with caring adults and age-appropriate activities right from the start," says co-author Ann Collins, NCCP's associate director for Program and Policy Analysis.

The study makes use of data on child care supply from statewide networks of child care resource and referral agencies in Illinois and Maryland. It is the third in a series of reports by the NCCP Child Care Research Partnership—one of five partnerships funded by the Child Care Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. ■

Center News Briefs

- The center will again support Stand for Children Day, this year on June 1. Contact Christy Schwengel, Stand for Children, 1834 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20009 Tel.: 202-234-0095 x107 Fax: 202-234-0217, e-mail: christy@stand.org, web site: www.stand.org
- The March 2000 edition of ***the forum*** from NCCP's Research Forum on Children, Families, and the New Federalism focuses on using national and administrative data sets to assess welfare reform. See the Research Forum web site: www.researchforum.org.
- An editing error occurred in the Winter 2000 *News and Issues* article, "The Impact of Welfare Reform: Have We Asked the Right Questions?" (p. 2). The first key research finding should have read: Income supplements paired with mandatory work requirements help to reduce poverty and improve child well-being.
- **Priscilla Y. González** has joined NCCP as project coordinator to work on the Community Development study, which examines efforts that link early childhood strategies with community-building initiatives, as well as to assist with other projects in the Program and Policy Unit. At Zero Population Growth, she led a year-long project on the status of children in large U.S. cities. A graduate of Barnard College, Columbia University, she studied contemporary issues in postwar El Salvador and gender issues and nationalism in Zimbabwe, and gained research and advocacy experience at Amnesty International in Ecuador and The Feminist Majority.
- The Research Forum welcomes **Brenda Hureau** as administrative assistant. She brings 15 years of experience at the Pharmacology Department of Columbia's medical school. She has a Bachelor's degree in classics from Hunter College and has completed course requirements toward a Master's degree in art history.
- The Center bids a sad farewell to **Mariah Quish**, who is now in Kigali, Rwanda to organize the financial office of Concern Worldwide, a voluntary social service agency serving developing nations. Mariah supervised creation of the NCCP grants and management database. The Center warmly welcomes **Edie Miller**, NCCP's new financial manager. She brings extensive experience in budget and grant management, program evaluation, and proposal writing. She has served the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget the New York State Division of Budget, and more recently, the Sixteenth Street Community Health Center in Milwaukee. Her Bachelor's degree in political science is from the State University of New York at Binghamton and her Masters in public administration is from the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy at State University of New York at Albany.
- NCCP wishes a happy retirement to **Alina Martin**, who has been with NCCP since its inception and was responsible for accounting activities at the Center. In her new life, she will be a discussion moderator on Univision's Internet web site for the Spanish-speaking community. NCCP congratulates **Ernie Diaz**, former NCCP clerk-receptionist, on assuming her responsibilities in the Business Office as administrative aide.
- The Program and Policy Unit welcomes **Dr. Annie Georges** as associate research scientist. She has primary responsibility for data management and analysis for the Child Care Research Partnership—a research project that examines administrative and other data on child care supply, child care subsidies, and child care providers to inform child care policy. (See article on page 3.) She also assists on a multi-state study of child care subsidy duration and will develop a research agenda using states' administrative data sets. Previously, she was research associate at the National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering and the New York City Rent Guidelines Board. Her Doctorate in economics from The Pennsylvania State University focused on women's education and poverty.
- New staff associate **Bob Wagmiller** will assist the policy and demographic work of the Center. He is principally responsible for developing NCCP's line of research using multiple administrative data sets from multiple systems, including gathering data on young children receiving protective and preventative services in New York City and conducting needs assessments for child care and early childhood services. He was a sampling specialist at Mathematica Policy Research. A doctoral candidate in sociology at the University of Chicago, he holds a Master's degree from the University of Maryland and a Bachelor's degree from Miami University, both in sociology, and completed the Program in Survey Sampling at the University of Michigan.
- The Center congratulates **Martha Garvey** on her promotion to administrative coordinator for the Communications Unit. NCCP also congratulates Martha on her graduation from Columbia University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in english literature. ■

National Center for Children in Poverty
The Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University

J. Lawrence Aber, *Director*
Jane Knitzer, *Deputy Director and Director for Program and Policy Analysis*
Julian Palmer, *Director for Communications and Publications*

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Carole J. Oshinsky, *Managing Editor*

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Publications of Note

This column highlights recent publications recommended for program administrators and policymakers by the Center's program staff and librarian. ***Documents should be ordered directly from the indicated publisher or distributor.***

- **Comprehensive guide for caregivers in day-care settings: Training child care workers and parents to reduce the at-risk factor in infants and young children,** by Nettie Becker with Paul Becker. "Young children at risk" live in families from across all socioeconomic strata. This practical guide provides a comprehensive view into the needs of these children with a focus on those living in families dealing with the hardships of poverty. The author gives statistics and practical solutions based on research and her experience working with young children. Aimed at the caregiver community as well as parents, the text contains minimal technical language and many vignettes to illuminate helpful strategies. The author suggests using a "remedial mothering" intervention process that calls for caregivers to restart their relationship with the at-risk child. For example, the caregivers for a six-month-old girl with developmental delays could intervene by starting to relate to this baby as if she were a few weeks old, thus initiating a new bonding process. Training and counseling would also be given to the baby's mother. The reader is guided through the stages in the bonding process and into developmental areas such as increasing sensory awareness, stimulating motor development, and encouraging social awareness. For at risk four- and five-year-olds who exhibit very low thresholds of anger and uncontrolled emotions, she recommends specific activities for caregivers and parents to develop and improve their parenting skills and techniques, including discipline approaches. She also addresses how to choose quality child care and techniques for working with children with special disabilities, such as autism, neurological or speech impairments, visual or hearing problems, and physical and motor deficits. (1999, 209 pp.; $52.95, cloth, $35.95, paper + p/h)
  Charles C. Thomas Publisher, Ltd., 2600 South First Street, Springfield, IL 62704; (800) 258-8980/Fax: (217)-789-9130/Web: www.ccthomas.com/E-mail: books@ccthomas.com

- **21st century families: Blueprints to create family-friendly workplaces, schools, and governments,** by Gayle Kimball. Aimed at parents, employers, and policymakers, this report addresses the following questions: (1) What challenges are confronted by working parents and their children? (2) What can businesses, schools, and legislatures do to support contemporary families? (3) What strategies work? Approximately 4,000 working parents, students, teachers, business managers, small business owners, legislators, child care center directors, and family service providers were interviewed. Several myths about family/work life in the U.S. are dispelled including: (1) The U.S. is supportive of families and children. (2) Work and family life are not connected. (3) Parenting is solely a private issue and not a social one. (4) Only those who have failed ask for help. (5) Home issues are feminine while the workworld is masculine. The author asserts that working parents often go through a cycle of self blame. An example is a working mother who tries to convince herself to "just get organized" so she can do more. Self blame can feed political apathy and prevent parents from participating in social change. The author suggests the following strategies to implement family-based programs in the work setting: (1) Identify potential allies and assess the attitudes of managers; (2) look at the policies of similar companies; and (3) promote awareness of possible loss of valuable employees from family/work conflicts. (1999, 446 pp.; $45 + $2.00 p/h)
  Equality Press, 42 Ranchita Way, Suite 5, Chico, CA 95928; (916) 345-8118/Web: www.ecst.csuchico.edu/~gkimball/E-mail: gkimball@oavax.csuchico.edu

- **Labor's role in addressing the child care crisis,** by Lea Grundy, Lissa Bell, and Netsy Firestein. This report is written for citizens organizing to get child care policies on the agenda of employee-worker contracts. Prominent labor leaders were interviewed to assess union achievements in the child care field, collective bargaining strategies, and nationwide examples of implemented agreements, and to gather suggestions on how to increase worker activism on child care issues. In New York, a union-led coalition of workers won over $177 million for state child care services in 1998. In San Francisco, community activists and labor unions led a campaign resulting in passage of three bills addressing child care issues. One bill provides stipends to child care workers meeting educational and tenure criteria; another extends the right to family leave to more workers; the third examines the use of State Disability Insurance Funds to pay for family and medical leave. The authors call for unionizing child care workers to help increase professionalism and obtain better compensation. Large-scale organizing initiatives are being implemented in Massachusetts, Seattle, and Philadelphia. Policy goals of these initiatives include: (1) government commitment to increase investment in quality, affordable child care; (2) fair compensation for child care workers; (3) and paid family leave. The authors suggest that making the availability of quality child care a priority for union activists can create a model for all working families. (1999, 46 pp.; free)
  Foundation for Child Development, 345 East 46th Street, New York, NY 10017-3562; (212) 697-3150/Fax: (212) 697-2258/Web: www.ffcd.org

- **Domestic violence and children,** edited by Lucy Salcido Carter and Carol S. Stevenson. Domestic violence affects 3.3 to 10 million children each year and can negatively impact children's emotional, social, and cognitive development. This special journal issue provides comprehensive information and action steps which emphasize less costly preventive strategies to attack the problem. Specialists in the field summarize research on: (1) the prevalence and impact of child exposure to violence; (2) federal and state laws and the legal system's response; (3) the roles of child protective, community-based domestic violence, and health and mental health services; and (4) trends in prevention strategies. Several recent laws to safeguard children may have unintended negative consequences, especially if they shorten children's stays in foster care to promote prompt permanent placement, leaving little time for families to become safe, recover from physical and emotional trauma, and find a new job and/or home. All but 12 states have laws that criminalize nonphysical acts of harm such as leaving a child alone with a known abuser, or failing to intervene or seek immediate medical attention when a child is sick or hurt. Parents may be unfairly penalized for being scared or unsuccessful in an attempt to intervene. The editors suggest putting domestic violence prevention strategies in home visitation programs targeting infants and preschool-aged children already at risk for child abuse. Such programs support healthy relationships by building on family strengths. Families may be more receptive to change behavior with this approach rather than from legal or punitive measures imposed by child welfare services. (Winter 1999, *The Future of Children*, Volume 9, No. 3, pp. 1–144; free)
  Center for the Future of Children, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Attn: Circulation Department, 300 Second Street, Suite 102, Los Altos, CA 94022; (415) 948-3696/Fax: (415) 948-6498/Web: www.futureofchildren.org

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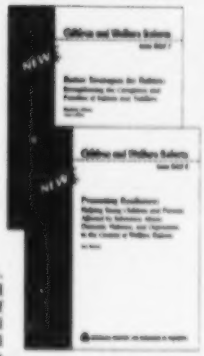

☐ **Issue Brief 8—Promoting Resilience: Helping Young Children and Parents Affected by Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Depression in the Context of Welfare Reform.** J. Knitzer. Addresses the needs of an especially vulnerable population of families affected by welfare reform, those whose parental risk factors significantly increase the likelihood that their young children will have developmental, behavioral, or school problems. Highlights service, policy, and funding strategies to promote resilience, social competence, and school readiness in children, repair (or prevent) damaged parent-child relationships, and ensure child safety while helping parents meet work-related welfare goals. (February 2000). 24 pp.

☐ **Issue Brief 7—Better Strategies for Babies: Strengthening the Caregivers and Families of Infants and Toddlers.** E. Gelman and A. Collins. Highlights strategies states and localities can use to promote the healthy development of infants and toddlers in the context of promoting parental economic self-sufficiency. Provides examples of state and local policies, programs, and partnerships that address access and quality issues related to infant and toddler care and stimulate strong and nurturing parent-child relationships, while at the same time supporting low-income parents with very young children who are currently in or moving into the workforce. (January 2000). 20 pp.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED ISSUE BRIEFS

☐ **Issue Brief 6—Beyond Work: Strategies to Promote the Well-Being of Young Children and Families in the Context of Welfare Reform.** N. Cauthen and J. Knitzer. (November 1999). 24 pp.

☐ **Issue Brief 5—Child Care by Kith and Kin: Supporting Family, Friends, and Neighbors Caring for Children.** A. Collins and B. Carlson. (1998). 20 pp.

☐ **Issue Brief 4—Responsible Fatherhood and Welfare: How States Can Use the New Law to Help Children.** S. Bernard. (1998). 24 pp.

☐ **Issue Brief 3—The New Welfare Law and Vulnerable Families: Implications for Child Welfare/Child Protection Systems.** J. Knitzer and S. Bernard. (1997). 20 pp.

☐ **Issue Brief 2—Anticipating the Effects of Federal and State Welfare Changes on Systems that Serve Children.** A. Collins and J. L. Aber. (1997). 12 pp.

☐ **Issue Brief 1—How Welfare Reform Can Help or Hurt Children.** A. Collins and J. L. Aber. (1997). 12 pp.

RELATED WELFARE REFORM PUBLICATIONS

☐ **Lives on the Line: American Families and the Struggle to Make Ends Meet.** M. Shirk, N. G. Bennett, and J. L. Aber. Melds affecting personal profiles with sophisticated demographic analysis to create a vivid portrait of what life is like for more than 13 million American children growing up below the poverty line. *Book.* (September 1999). 294 pp. **$24.95.** Published by Westview Press, Customer Service: (800) 331-3761.

☐ **Mapping Welfare Research Perspectives: Past, Present, and Future.** B. Blum and E. Berrey. Overview of growing body of welfare reform-related research, emerging research issues and critical sub-groups within the welfare caseloads. Describes lessons from research prior to the 1996 welfare reform, what questions are being addressed by current welfare research, and what information is needed to help policymakers address the next phase of welfare reform. A Research Forum publication. *Report.* (August 1999). 34 pp. **FREE.**

☐ **The Role of Administrative Data and National Data Sets in Understanding Welfare Reform.** ***the forum,*** March 2000. This edition of the quarterly newsletter from the NCCP Research Forum on Children, Families, and the New Federalism explores how analysis of national survey data and the creative use of data routinely collected in operating programs serve as important resources for assessing the effects of recent welfare changes.

CHILD CARE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP REPORTS

☐ **Report 3: Scant Increases After Welfare Reform: Regulated Child Care Supply in Illinois and Maryland, 1996-1998.** J. L. Kreader, J. Piecyk, and A. Collins. Describes changes in the supply of regulated child care in two states since the implementation of welfare reform, especially in communities with high concentrations of low-income families. Uses child care resource and referral data to assess changes in regulated centers and family child care homes, Head Start, and prekindergarten programs, including changes in distribution across zip codes, hours of operation, opening/closing of facilities, and slots. (June 2000). 64 pp. **$8.00.**

☐ **Report 2: Patterns and Growth of Child Care Voucher Use by Families Connected to Cash Assistance in Illinois and Maryland.** J. Piecyk, A. Collins, and J. L. Kreader. Uses child care resource and referral data from two states to analyze child care subsidy use by current welfare recipients—to enable training, education, and employment, and by former recipients now in the workforce. *Report.* (May 1999). **$5.00.**

☐ **Report 1: A Study of Regulated Child Care Supply in Illinois and Maryland.** A. Collins and J. Li. Analyzes regulated low-income child care markets in two states using child care resource and referral data on programs in each state's child care resource and referral database, female employment, and poverty rates to understand how government policies effect the supply of child care. *Report.* (1997). 32 pp. **$5.00.**

MAP AND TRACK SERIES

☐ **Map and Track: State Initiatives for Young Children and Families, 2000 Edition.** (Forthcoming).

☐ **Map and Track: State Initiatives to Encourage Responsible Fatherhood, 1999 Edition.** Continues to track how states are responding to welfare changes with strategies to promote fathers as both economic providers and nurturers. Updates national and state demographic trends on father absence and single-father families. Includes maps, charts, and descriptions of 50 state initiatives, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. *Report.* (June 1999). **$19.95.**

☐ **Map and Track: State Initiatives for Young Children and Families, 1998 Edition.** J. Knitzer and S. Page. Updates and expands the 1996 edition on state initiatives to address the multiple needs of young children and families. Adds information on state strategies to link welfare reform with children's initiatives, more state-by-state indicators of young child and family well-being, young-child-related state welfare provisions, and income-promoting supports to low-income families. *Report.* (1998). 208 pp. **$19.95.**

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MENTAL HEALTH AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

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☐ **Starting Points: Challenging the "Quiet Crisis"—A Description of the Starting Points Sites.** Summarizes strategies and activities undertaken by the 14 Starting Points sites established as an outgrowth of the Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children. Outlines overall themes and lessons for policymakers and advocates. *Report.* (1997). 52 pp. **$5.00.**

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FALL 2000 Vol. 10, No. 3

News & Issues

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Child Poverty Rates Improve Since 1993 But One in Six U.S. Children is Poor

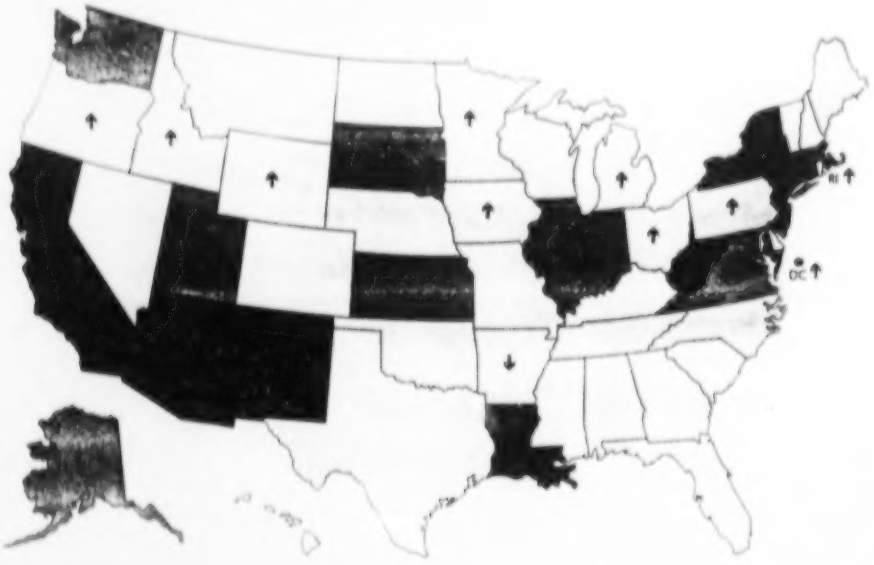
The child poverty rate has improved significantly in a dozen states since 1993, according to a new study by NCCP. But over the entire 1979 to 1998 period covered by the study, *Child Poverty in the States: Levels and Trends from 1979 to 1998*, the child poverty rate has risen significantly in 13 states and the District of Columbia and decreased significantly in only four states. (See map below.)

The study suggests three key points:

- *Child poverty is a solvable problem:* the child poverty rate has improved significantly since 1993, indicating that significant progress in reducing child poverty is achievable;
- *Child poverty rates remain too high:* the child poverty rate remains higher than it was from the late 1960s to the late 1970s, suggesting that a strong national economy alone is not enough to eliminate most child poverty; and
- *States can make a major difference:* a child growing up in California, Louisiana, or New York is two to three times as likely to be poor as a child in Virginia or Maryland.

(continued on page 2)

Levels of poverty for children under age 18, by state, 1998, and trends in poverty rates from 1979 to 1998



States with child poverty rates significantly lower than the national rate [12]

States with child poverty rates similar to the national rate [32]

States with child poverty rates significantly higher than the national rate [7]

↑ States where child poverty rate increased significantly between 1979 and 1998 [14]

↓ States where child poverty rate decreased significantly between 1979 and 1998 [4]

Note: Significant at a 90 percent confidence interval

NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHILDREN IN POVERTY

Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University

Identifying and promoting strategies to reduce the young child poverty rate and to improve the life chances of young children in poverty

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Child Poverty Rates Improve (continued from page 1)

The NCCP study separated long-term child poverty trends* into two periods, 1979–1993 and 1993–1998, that are defined by the national business cycle and by major changes in state and federal policies affecting low-income families. From 1979 to 1993 the national child poverty rate increased from 16.2 to 22.5 percent—an increase of almost 40 percent. During that same period the child poverty rate rose significantly in 18 states. From 1993 to 1998 the trend reversed and the poverty rate decreased by 17 percent.

The NCCP report was followed in late September by the release of new data from the Census Bureau showing that the national child poverty rate fell by another 2 percentage points to 17 percent in 1999, the largest one-year drop since the 1960s.

Many Children Still in Poverty

But recent progress against child poverty is no cause for complacency. In fact, today's child poverty rate is still higher than all but one of the years between 1967 and 1979. More than 12 million children remain in poverty in the United States and another 16.7 million children live in low-income families (those with incomes under 200 percent of the poverty line) that are struggling from paycheck to paycheck.

1993–1998 Changes in Poverty

The states that have significantly reduced their child poverty rates by more than 30 percent since 1993 include Tennessee, Arkansas, Michigan, South Carolina, Mississippi, Kentucky, Illinois, and New Jersey. Michigan is a prime example of a state that improved its child poverty rate in the 1993–1998 period but failed to recover much of the ground lost to child poverty from 1979 to 1993—when its poverty rate increased by 121 percent.

States that reduced their poverty rates by one-third or more: 1993–1998

State	1993 Rate (%)	1998 Rate (%)	1993–1998 % change
TENNESSEE	29.6	18.1	-39.0
ARKANSAS	26.4	16.3	-38.1
MICHIGAN	24.9	15.4	-38.1
SOUTH CAROLINA	28.6	18.1	-36.9
MISSISSIPPI	33.9	21.6	-36.4
KENTUCKY	28.6	18.6	-34.8
ILLINOIS	20.4	13.5	-34.1
NEW JERSEY	17.9	12.0	-33.3

All changes in the child poverty rate are considered statistically significant at a 90 percent confidence level.

1979–1998 Changes in Poverty

Over the longer term, the child poverty rate has increased significantly by over 40 percent in at least a dozen states since 1979. States that have been hit hard by increases in child poverty ranged from large states such as California (up 62 percent), Ohio (up 50 percent), Pennsylvania (up 49 percent), Michigan (up 37 percent), and New York (up 28 percent), to smaller states such as Iowa, Arizona, Minnesota, and Oregon (where increases ranged from 73 to 111 percent). The handful of states that defied the long-term trend and have reduced their child poverty rates since 1979 include New Jersey, Illinois, Arkansas, and South Dakota.

Changes in California

The long-term increase in child poverty had a particularly harsh impact in California, where the number of children in poverty grew from just under 900,000 in 1979 to 2.15 million in 1998, accounting for over 40 percent of the national increase of 3 million children in poverty over the past two decades. One in six poor children in the U.S. now lives in California compared to one in 11 in 1979.

One key finding in the report is that poverty is less concentrated in a few regions of the U.S. than it was in 1979, when almost all states with high levels of child poverty were in the South. "The South is no longer the poverty zone that it was in 1979," said the report's co-author, Dr. Neil Bennett. In 1979, seven of nine states with poverty rates significantly higher than the national average were in the South. Today only two of six states (Louisiana and West Virginia) in that category are in the South. Dr. Bennett is NCCP's senior advisor for demographic research and analysis. His co-author is Dr. Hsien-Hen Lu, an associate research scientist at NCCP, and assistant professor of Public Health at the Mailman School of Public Health.

Regional Differences

Neighboring states and geographical regions no longer have similar child poverty trends. In the Northeast, New Jersey's child poverty rate fell by 37 percent while New York's rate increased by 28 percent and Pennsylvania's rate went up by 49 percent. In the Midwest, South Dakota's child poverty rate decreased by nearly 40 percent during the same period that Iowa's rate doubled and Minnesota's rate increased by over 80 percent. At the same time, Ohio's child poverty rate increased by half and Illinois' rate decreased by one-third.

In the South, the child poverty rate fell significantly in Arkansas but increased in West Virginia and the District of Columbia. The child poverty rate in West Virginia (27.5 percent) is three times the rate in

* Note: The NCCP study analyzed annual income data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Surveys from 1979 to 1998, the most recent year for which such data was available. The study uses the official measure of poverty used by the Census Bureau. In 1998, the poverty threshold for a family of four was $16,600. The poverty statistics cited in this article were all significant at a 90 percent confidence interval. For a detailed methodology statement, see www.nccp.org.

(continued on page 1)

Child Poverty Rates Improve (continued from page 2)

The progress in reducing child poverty since 1993 tells us that this is not an intractable problem. Researchers and policymakers need to learn from those states that are making real inroads against child poverty.

Virginia (9 percent). Meanwhile, the West exhibited significant increases in the child poverty rate in California, Arizona, Wyoming, Oregon, and Idaho since 1979. Arizona, California, and New Mexico all have child poverty rates that are significantly higher than the national average, while Alaska and Washington's are significantly below the national average.

TANF/Poverty Reductions Not Parallel

From 1993 to 1998, state welfare caseloads were reduced by 47 percent, while the national child poverty rate decreased by only 17 percent.

"If we can cut the welfare caseload in half, we ought to be able to cut the child poverty rate in half also," says Dr. Larry Aber, NCCP's director. "We did see major progress in some states, especially Illinois, New Jersey and Tennessee, where welfare caseloads decreased by roughly one-half as child poverty rates declined by 33 to 39 percent. But we are concerned about the many states that cut their welfare caseloads by more than half with no improvement in their child poverty rate."

Under the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act that established TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) block grants to the states, states are obligated to monitor their child poverty rates and submit corrective action plans if rates have increased by more than 5 percent from the previous year.

"These stubbornly high rates of child poverty should concern every American citizen as well as our federal and state governments," says Dr. Aber, "because poverty places a glass ceiling on children's readiness for school, educational achievement, and future workforce potential."

"The progress in reducing child poverty since 1993 tells us that this is not an intractable problem," emphasizes Dr. Aber. "Researchers and policymakers need to learn from those states that are making real inroads against child poverty. What we learn could be the key to dramatically reducing child poverty throughout the United States." ■

Grade-School Class Raises Funds for NCCP to Help Less Fortunate

The fifth-grade class at the Silver Run School in Millville, New Jersey, recently donated $500 toward the work of the National Center for Children in Poverty. The class chose the Center to receive funds the students raised during the 1999-2000 school year for their community project. The project grew out of a school assembly on ethical values and the impact changing behavior can make. "It was the first time the children had been told they could make a difference in the world," says their teacher, Ms. Jean Mercoli. At a class discussion she led following the assembly, the fifth graders said they wanted to help children in America, especially kids their own age who were less fortunate than themselves.

Photo by Bassetti Photo Inc.

"These children come from a low-income area themselves," notes Ms. Mercoli. "Many live in broken homes and struggle daily. This project made them feel better about themselves that they could help kids worse off than they are." The children found NCCP after an Internet search on child poverty. To raise the money, they sold brownies in front of the local post office, publicizing their cause with signs and banners made in class. Many townspeople contributed money without buying the baked goods. "I was surprised at people's generosity," adds Ms. Mercoli, "because this is not a wealthy community."

Half the money came from contributions generated within the school. Posters and a weekly newsletter written by class members on the project's importance pitted each grade against the other to top collection goals (shown by bar graphs in the cafeteria). Children also gave up snacks to donate money, and a special week was set aside for teacher/staff donations.

"We congratulate these children for their initiative and kindness," says NCCP's director, Larry Aber. "They will serve as role models for other children who want to help improve the lives of children in poor families." ■

There Are No Stereotypes Here—The Faces of Child Poverty

Excerpt from *Lives on the Line* by Martha Shirk, Neil Bennett, and Lawrence Aber

Editor's Note: NCCP staff and journalist Martha Shirk co-authored the 1999 book: Lives on the Line: American Families and the Struggle to Make Ends Meet, *issued in paperback in September 2000 by Westview Press (a division of Perseus Books). The new edition contains an epilogue on the ten families profiled in the 1999 edition and features a new foreword by former Senator Bill Bradley that draws on his experience as a presidential candidate raising the issue of child poverty. The following article—adapted from the book's introduction—erases stereotypical images and paints an overall picture of the humanity and plight of ordinary poor families.* Lives on the Line *is available from Perseus Books: (800) 331-3761/www.perseusbooksgroup.com for $17.00 paper or $24.95 cloth plus shipping.*

"I want policymakers and legislators and ordinary people to understand what it means to our children that they are growing up poor."

Mother of five in Hawaii

There are poor children all around us, and yet too rarely do we stop to think about the special burdens that their families' economic status place on them as they are growing up, much less how we can help as individuals or how a change in public policy might affect their prospects. Nor do we often consider how the well-being of our entire nation is affected—our health-care systems, our schools, our overall prospects for economic growth—by the fact that 14 million American children are growing up in poor families.

To capture the challenges of raising children below the poverty line, we set out to profile 10 ordinary U.S. families, struggling to make ends meet. We had help from many people in finding families that would make good subjects —from social workers in Head Start programs, to union organizers, to community activists, to caseworkers in programs that provide all kinds of assistance to the poor. We didn't pre-screen the families for the presence or absence of particular problems, nor did the families want or receive compensation.

Each said their motivations for opening their lives to scrutiny were altruistic. "I want policymakers and legislators and ordinary people to understand what it means to our children that they are growing up poor," said a mother of five in Honolulu. "I want things to get better for families, especially for whose who are poorer than we are, who don't even have as little as we have."

Just Ordinary Poor Families

As a group, these families are fairly representative of all U.S. families living in poverty. Four are white, two Hispanic, three black, and one Pacific Islander. Four live in urban areas, three in rural areas, and three in the suburbs. Most of them are headed by single or divorced mothers, as is true of most poor families nationally, though many of the single mothers benefit from the presence in their families' lives of active, income-contributing fathers, a factor not captured by statistics on household structure. Most of the mothers gave birth to their first child while a teenager, another common characteristic of poor families nationally. And in almost all of the families, one or both parents work, as does at least one parent in 87 percent of U.S. families with poor young children.

To learn about life below the poverty line, journalist Martha Shirk spent up to a week—more in a few cases—with each of these families in 1998. She rose with them, often well before dawn, followed the parents around in their jobs, visited the children in their classrooms, accompanied the families to church and to the grocery store, and spent hours with them around their kitchen tables, just talking about their lives. The result is a verbal snapshot of each family's life at a particular point in time. By now, their lives could be either better or worse.

The stories of the ten families are all different, yet in many ways, they are the same:

- *Most of the parents grew up poor.* Many struggled in school, feeling marginalized by their economic status, as do some of their children. Some were abused as children, and some have been abused by their spouses or boyfriends as adults. Most have been on welfare at some point in their lives.
- *Most had difficulty understanding the government's eligibility rules for programs ranging from WIC to Medicaid, to food stamps, to subsidized day care.* Several families seem to be eligible for benefits they're not receiving, either because they're unaware of the programs or because caseworkers have provided faulty information about eligibility rules. A few lost out for years on what many experts argue is the nation's single most important anti-poverty program—the Earned Income Tax Credit—simply because they didn't know about it.

For Each Child, Poverty a Different Experience

Lives on the Line illustrates the different ways children experience poverty, depending upon their ages, their parents' resourcefulness, the supportiveness of their relatives and their communities, and their own innate strengths:

- *Some are sailing through childhood seemingly oblivious to their parents' struggles to make ends meet,* except as they interfere with their ability to dress like their friends, play with the toys they see advertised on TV, or participate in school activities, almost all of which require special fees these days.

(continued on page 5)

There Are No Stereotypes Here (continued from page 4)

- *Getting timely and good-quality medical and dental care is a frequent—and sometimes life-threatening—problem for almost all of the families,* except for the few who have either Medicaid coverage or health insurance through a parent's job. Many of the disorders that plague them are preventable with regular medical care. Trivial ailments can turn into major illnesses when their parents delay getting them care for financial reasons.
- *Some of these children sometimes go to bed hungry, particularly at the end of the month,* when the food stamps or WIC vouchers run out, or the money their parents have set aside for food has had to be diverted to keep the electricity from being turned off. "I can still remember the time when all we had to eat was saimin noodles," a 13-year-old girl in Honolulu recalled with obvious distaste.
- *The size and condition of these children's homes vary.* Their homes range from a one-room apartment in Oakland, California, to a trailer in Basalt, Colorado, to a homeless shelter in White Plains, New York, to a three-bedroom, lace-curtained house in Chester, Illinois. Conditions in their homes range from disorganized to neat as a pin. "My mom taught me even if you're poor, you can keep your house clean," says Maria Gonzalez, a mother of three in Basalt, Colorado.
- *The way the children go to sleep at night varies.* Some fall asleep to the soothing words of their mothers or fathers reading *Goodnight Moon*; others put themselves to bed on the floor, counting the minutes until their mother returns home from her night-shift job. "Sometimes I get scared," admitted 9-year-old Manuel Rodriguez of Oakland, California, who puts himself and his 6-year-old brother to bed because their mother doesn't get home from work until 11 p.m.
- *The cost and quality of day care are major problems for the families with preschool-aged children or school-aged children who require before- or after-school care.* "I really hate that place," said Megan Jones, a mother in Palmerton, Pennsylvania, of the foul-smelling center that her first-grade son attends before and after school.
- *The cost, availability, and reliability of transportation are constant worries.* Public transportation simply isn't available in many of the areas in which poor families live, particularly rural areas and suburbs. Many poor families are forced, instead, to rely on unreliable fifteen-year-old gas-guzzlers. The cost of an unexpected auto repair on an aging car can throw a family's budget completely out of kilter.
- *Some of the children are doing well in school; others have failed several grades.* "It seems like they just don't want me here," said Orlando Saylor, 14, a special education student in Louisville, Kentucky, who is on the verge of failing ninth grade.
- *Some children have great plans for their futures while others have no plans at all.* "I want to be a neurosurgeon," said Letisha Washington, 16, of Grand Rapids, Michigan. "I've never been able to get him interested in anything besides TV and food," says Carlotta Saylor, a mother in Louisville, about her oldest son, struggling to graduate from high school before he turns 22.

What Research Tells Us

Some of the effects of early-in-life poverty—low birthweight, hospitalized during childhood, low quality medical care, hunger and malnutrition, high levels of interpersonal conflict in their homes, violence and environmental toxins in their neighborhoods, and delays in physical, cognitive, language, and emotional development that, in turn, affect their readiness for school—aren't seen until the children are older. As poor children become adolescents and then young adults, they are more likely to drop out of school, give birth to or father children out-of-wedlock, and be unemployed. Some of the older adolescents and young adults in our profiled families struggle with these problems.

In the last decade, scientists have compiled evidence that extreme poverty (an income of less than 50 percent of the poverty line) early in life has a greater effect on a child's future life chances than less extreme poverty later in childhood. The more we learn about brain development in early childhood, the more ominous the prospects seem for children who are spending the first few years of their lives without adequate food, with intermittent medical care, and in day-care or home environments that are unstimulating, at best, and squalid, at worst.

Choices Often Between Bad Options

Try to put yourselves in these families places. What would you do if you had to choose between buying a birthday cake for your child and paying your electricity bill. Would you sleep on the floor so your children could sleep in a bed? Would you postpone marriage to a man you loved because marriage would mean an end to the child care subsidies that enable your children to attend a good, safe day-care center while you work? Would you quit a night-shift job and go on welfare so you wouldn't have to leave your teenage daughters alone at night in your dangerous neighborhood?

Most poor parents love their children, and show bravery and perseverance in the face of challenges that would defeat many of us. For the most part, they're trying their best. And they're all their children have. Policymakers, citizens, and opinion leaders need to craft public policies that will help these families make ends meet. Strategies should include increasing income, reducing costs, increasing the skills, abilities, and disposition needed to work, and increasing economic opportunities. How we do this will be uniquely American. The health and well-being of future generations depend on our doing it. ■

Center News Briefs

- The Carnegie Corporation of New York's Starting Points initiative has published an issue brief authored by NCCP deputy director **Dr. Jane Knitzer**: *Using Mental Health Strategies to Move the Early Childhood Agenda and Promote School Readiness*. The brief describes new strategies to promote the emotional well-being of young children and their families, raise the quality of caregiving, and make use of available services in the community such as home visiting programs and early health care services. For ordering information, see back page.
- The November issue of ***the forum***, the newsletter of NCCP's Research Forum on Children, Families, and the New Federalism, describes The Next Generation, a project to understand the effects of welfare and employment policies on low-income children. The July issue argued that an array of interrelated interventions will be needed to achieve and sustain the self-sufficiency goals of welfare reform and that TANF is just one service in a larger strategy that would help many low-income families. See www.researchforum.org.
- The Center's Demography Unit has been reorganized as the Social Science Research Unit. This change reflects a growing appreciation of the value of synthesizing research across multiple disciplines to better understand the causes and consequences of child poverty and what can be done to improve the lives of low-income families. The unit is 'ed by **Dr. Mary Clare Lennon**, associate professor of clinical public health in the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, and former research director of NCCP's Research Forum. The new unit brings together work on child development and evaluation research as well as demographic research on the causes and consequences of child poverty, and work using administrative data, census data, and other large data sets. It is staffed by four associate research scientists, three of whom joined NCCP in the last two years: **Dr. Annie Georges**, **Dr. Hsien-Hen Lu**, and **Bob Wagmiller**; and **Dr. Elizabeth Thompson Gershoff** and a visiting fellow who are described below, as well as three part-time research assistants.
- The Social Science Research Unit welcomes **Dr. Elizabeth Thompson Gershoff** as associate research scientist to coordinate NCCP developmental research, which includes program evaluation and longitudinal research on early socioemotional development and children and youth at risk. Her Doctor of Philosophy in child development from the University of Texas at Austin focused on emotional and cognitive processes that affect parenting and child development. At Arizona State University, she did post-doctoral training in prevention science and developmental methods. Her special interest is the links between corporal punishment and physical abuse and their implications for prevention of child abuse.
- NCCP has a new visiting fellow, **Dr. Cybele Raver**, associate professor at the Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies at the University of Chicago. Previously, she was assistant professor in early childhood at Cornell University. She will spend the next year enriching the center's work around children's mental health issues and young families under stress. Her Ph.D. in child development is from Yale University.
- The Program and Policy Unit welcomes policy analyst **Kinsey Dinan** to assist with *Map and Track* and work on projects examining state efforts to promote economic security for low-income children and their families. She has a Master's Degree in international relations from Yale University, and comes to NCCP from Human Rights Watch, where she did research, reporting, and advocacy for women's rights in Asia.
- The Center bids a sad farewell to two staffers: **Ellen Winn**, who as Research Forum coordinator nurtured relationships between the Forum and state and local advocacy groups and enhanced the search capability of the Forum's welfare research databases, has joined J.P. Morgan Charitable Trust as assistant program officer for public education, health, and the environment; **Joshua Brown**, who coordinated the design and implementation phases of NCCP's evaluation of the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program and disseminated findings to a wide audience, is completing his doctorate in developmental psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University.

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Carole J. Oshinsky *Managing Editor*

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Publications of Note

This column highlights recent publications recommended for program administrators and policymakers by the Center's program staff and librarian. ***Documents should be ordered directly from the indicated publisher or distributor.***

- **A league table of child poverty in rich nations,** by Peter Adamson, John Micklewright, and Anna Wright. One in six children (47 million) living in the world's wealthiest nations—members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)—is poor. Although national incomes in most OECD nations have doubled twice since 1950, the authors argue, a significant portion of their children continue to live in families so materially poor that normal health and growth are at risk. Many more live in relative poverty; while their physical needs may be met, they miss the activities and advantages expected by their peers. The report reveals a wide range of child poverty rates in countries with similar economic development—from under 3 percent in Sweden to over 22 percent in the U.S.—using a relative measure of poverty (defined as households with income below 50 percent of the national median). Poverty measures in the U.S. have traditionally been based on the dollar amount needed for an adequate diet rather than a minimum standard of living. Using the U.S. measure, U.S. poverty rates are lower, but still rank in the highest third. Among the causes of child poverty examined are single parenthood, worklessness (defined as families where there is no one employed), unemployment, low wages and wage inequality, and inadequate levels of social spending and benefit transfers. The authors suggest a child poverty gap of from 0.1 percent to 0.66 percent of national income; most poor families live close to the poverty line. They offer policies that would move these families well above poverty and keep them from falling back. (2000, 28 pp.; Child Poverty in Rich Nations: Innocenti Report Card No. 1, $12 paper/free on web)
UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Piazza SS. Annunziata, 12, 50122 Florence, Italy; (39055) 20330/Fax: (39055) 244817/Web: www.unicef-icdc.org/store/download.cfm@downloadid=226.htm/E-mail: florence.orders@unicef.org.

- **Paradox of our times: Hunger in a strong economy,** by Sandra H. Venner, Ashley F. Sullivan, and Dorie Seavey. The authors outline the problem of food insecurity and hunger and identify key forces driving this situation: flaws within two major programs to fight food insecurity: TANF and the Food Stamp Program; and economic changes that are increasing inequality, insecurity, and stagnant wages for low-income families. In 1998, families with children experienced food insecurity at double the rate of households without children, while families with young children experienced an even higher level. Nationally, food insecurity remains persistent despite recent favorable national economic trends. At the state level, food insecurity varies widely, ranging from less than 5 percent to over 15 percent. Instead of complementing the Food Stamp Program, TANF is having a negative impact; many eligible former welfare recipients are not continuing food stamp benefits because they believe they are no longer eligible. This has increased the use of private emergency food services such as food banks, soup kitchens, and pantries. Social services staff often fail to inform applicants denied TANF that they may receive food stamp benefits. The authors suggest states can: (1) use federal matching funds to develop Food Stamp Program education plans that address benefits, eligibility, and application procedures; (2) ensure TANF recipient's, applicant's, or terminator's food stamp eligibility is checked; and (3) help working people get to food stamp locations and set convenient office hours. (2000, 27 pp.; $6 + $2.50 p/h)
Center on Hunger and Poverty, School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Tufts University, Medford, MA 02155; (617) 627-3956/Fax: (617) 627-3020/Web: hunger.tufts.edu/pub/hunger.shtml/E-mail: hunger@infonet.tufts.edu

- **The plight of the working poor,** by David T. Ellwood. The author addresses America's income disparity and the limits and opportunities of TANF. Federal spending on low-income families has grown from $6 billion in 1984 to an estimated $51.7 billion in 1999, mainly on the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Federal health insurance programs have been expanded to cover more children. Low-income working families now qualify for EITC along with food stamps, Medicaid, and, sometimes, subsidized child care. However, the author asserts, the status of working poor families is not as positive as it appears. It is fairly simple to enroll in EITC and the program information is readily available within communities. But programs like food stamps and Medicaid have complex enrollment procedures and often those eligible for the program fail to enroll—it takes a great deal of time and often requires information that is humiliating for enrollees to offer. The author proposes a seamless enrollment process for every state or a process similar to the EITC, which requires the participant to enroll via tax returns. Child care is another area of conflict for parents returning to work. The author says policymakers only consider cost, while to child development experts quality is the key to making a difference in children's lives. He warns of leaving Head Start as a part-time service and continuing to demand parent involvement, although some Head Start programs now offer full-day services for working parents as well as other state and federal programs. (1999, 8 pp.; Children's Roundtable Report No. 2; Free)
The Brookings Institution, 1775 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 797-6000/Fax: (202) 797-6004/Web: www.brook.edu/pa/childrensroundtable/issue2/issue2.htm

- **Infants and toddlers in out-of-home care,** edited by Debby Cryer and Thelma Harms. This volume reflects increasing interest in ensuring that infants and toddlers have quality out-of-home care and the reality that more very young children are spending their days in non-home settings. The eminent authors present research-based recommendations for public policy, practice, preparation of personnel, and future research that would improve the quality of child care programs. Only 8 percent of infant and toddler classes were rated as good or excellent in a 1993 study of five states, while 40 percent were rated as being of poor quality; similar findings hold in family day care homes. Teacher sensitivity was more likely to be lower in both centers and homes serving low-income families. The authors raise major questions about health practices in child care programs, the attention individual children receive, the attachments they form with caregivers, and the morale and education of caregivers. They express concern about the shortage of learning materials and stimulating activities for infant and toddler care compared to preschool settings, the relation between parent and teacher, the relative lack of emphasis on adult components of early intervention and comprehensive programs, and the cultural context of out-of-home care. Further, conclude the authors, the workplace needs to be more supportive of families, and society needs more education on the importance of quality in out-of-home care for very young children. They call for more research on how children's cognitive and social development is effected by the high rate of child care personnel turnover and the shifting language use and differing cultures in the program and the home. (2000, 376 pp.; $34+ p/h)
Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., P.O. Box 10624, Baltimore, MD 21285-0624; (800) 638-3775/Fax: (410) 337-8539/Web: www.brookespublishing.com/E-mail: custserv@brookespublishing.com

New Publications and Popular Series from NCCP

STATE POVERTY STATISTICS

☐ **Childhood Poverty Research Brief 2: Child Poverty in the States—Levels and Trends from 1979 to 1998.** N. G. Bennett and H. Lu. Describes levels of child poverty and long-term trends in all 50 states and the District of Columbia from 1979 to 1998. While a number of states have significantly reduced their child poverty rates since 1993, the national child poverty rate remains significantly higher than in 1979. (August 2000). 6 pp. **$5.00.**

CHILDREN AND WELFARE REFORM ISSUE BRIEFS
$5.00 each/ 4 for $15.00

☐ **Issue Brief 8—Promoting Resilience: Helping Young Children and Parents Affected by Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence, and Depression in the Context of Welfare Reform.** J. Knitzer. (February 2000). 24 pp.

☐ **Issue Brief 7—Better Strategies for Babies: Strengthening the Caregivers and Families of Infants and Toddlers.** E. Gelman and A. Collins. (January 2000). 20 pp.

☐ **Issue Brief 6—Beyond Work: Strategies to Promote the Well-Being of Young Children and Families in the Context of Welfare Reform.** N. Cauthen and J. Knitzer. (November 1999). 24 pp.

For information on Issue Briefs 1–5, visit www.nccp.org.

RELATED WELFARE REFORM PUBLICATIONS

☐ **Lives on the Line: American Families and the Struggle to Make Ends Meet.** M. Shirk, N. G. Bennett, and J. L. Aber. Melds personal profiles with demographic analysis to create a vivid portrait of what life is like for more than 13 million American children growing up below the poverty line. *Book.* (September 1999). 294 pp. **$24.95.** *Paper.* (August 2000). **$17.** Published by Westview Press, Customer Service: (800) 331-3761.

☐ **Welfare Research Perspectives: Past, Present, and Future, 2000 Edition: A View from the Research Forum on Children, Families, and the New Federalism.** Updates knowledge on welfare reform-related research, emerging research issues, and critical sub-groups within the welfare caseloads. Describes questions still needing to be addressed by welfare research, progress made, and information that would help policymakers craft the next phase of welfare reform. *Report.* (August 2000). 20 pp. FREE.

☐ **The Next Generation Project: Collaborating to Understand the Effects of Welfare and Employment Policies on Low-Income Children.** ***the forum.*** November 2000. FREE.

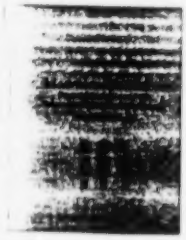
☐ **Seeing TANF from the Inside Out—Reconsidering the Program's Role in the Wake of Welfare Reform.** ***the forum,*** July 2000. FREE.

CHILD CARE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP REPORTS

☐ **Scant Increases After Welfare Reform: Regulated Child Care Supply in Illinois and Maryland, 1996-1998.** J. L. Kreader, J. Piecyk, and A. Collins. Describes changes in the supply of regulated child care in two states since welfare reform, especially in areas with high concentrations of low-income families. Uses child care resource and referral data to assess changes in regulated centers and family child care homes, Head Start, and prekindergarten programs. (June 2000). 64 pp. **$8.00.**

☐ **Patterns and Growth of Child Care Voucher Use by Families Connected to Cash Assistance in Illinois and Maryland.** J. Piecyk, A. Collins, and J. L. Kreader. Uses child care resource and referral data from two states to analyze child care subsidy use by current welfare recipients—to enable training, education, and employment, and by former recipients now in the workforce. (May 1999). **$5.00.**

MAP AND TRACK SERIES



NEW ☐ **Map and Track: State Initiatives for Young Children and Families, 2000 Edition.** N. K. Cauthen, J. Knitzer, and C. H. Ripple. Updates and expands information in the 1998 edition on the level of commitment to young children and families across the nation. Continues to "map" state initiatives for young children and families (program development strategies, community mobilization and systemic change strategies, high-level leadership) and "track" them over time. New for 2000 is information on whether states are implementing explicit strategies to promote positive transition to school and state-by-state indicators of state efforts to enhance economic security for low-income families and young children. *Report.* (2000). **$19.95.** Special pricing: *Map and Track* series: 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000 editions—**$29.95** for two titles; **$34.95** for three editions; **$39.95** for all editions.

☐ **Map and Track: State Initiatives to Encourage Responsible Fatherhood, 1999 Edition.** Continues to track how states are responding to welfare changes with strategies to promote fathers as both economic providers and nurturers. Updates national and state demographic trends on father absence and single-father families. Includes descriptions of 50 state initiatives. *Report.* (June 1999). **$19.95.**

MENTAL HEALTH AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

NEW ☐ **Using Mental Health Strategies to Move the Early Childhood Agenda and Promote School Readiness.** J. Knitzer. Highlights emerging strategies to promote the emotional wellness of young children and their families, enhance caregiver skills, and ensure appropriate use of specialized services. Describes mental health initiatives in child care, early learning and home visiting programs, early health care, and statewide approaches. *Report.* (2000). 20 pp. $10.00. Jointly published with Carnegie Corporation of New York's Starting Points initiative. For other publications in this series, contact Rings-Leighton Fulfillment: (202) 319-2951.

☐ **Teaching Conflict Resolution: An Effective School-Based Approach to Violence Prevention.** J. L. Aber, J. Brown, and C. Henrich. Describes one of the largest and longest running school-based violence prevention programs in the country—the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program—and provides concrete evidence that such initiatives can help to prevent violence among children and youth. *Report.* (1999). 20 pp.

☐ **Lessons from the Field: Head Start Mental Health Strategies to Meet Changing Needs.** H. Yoshikawa and J. Knitzer. Describes promising strategies generated by Head Start programs to meet the changing mental health needs of children, families, and staff in Head Start and other programs serving low-income families. *Report.* (1997). 103 pp. Available only on diskette as PDF files (specify Mac or PC format, requires Adobe Acrobat Reader) **$5.00.**

☐ **Starting Points: Challenging the "Quiet Crisis"—A Description of the Starting Points Sites.** Summarizes strategies and activities of the 14 Starting Points sites established as an outgrowth of the Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children. Outlines lessons for policymakers and advocates. *Report.* (1997). 52 pp. **$5.00.**

Also see Issue Brief 8 in Children and Welfare Reform Series.

Prices include postage and handling. Prepayment or purchase order required. Make checks payable to Columbia University and mail to NCCP, 154 Haven Avenue, New York, NY 10032-1180 or fax your purchase order to (212) 544-4200 or 544-4201 or e-mail to nccp@columbia.edu.

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